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John T Bulloch

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THE FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN ABERDEEN.

THE DENBURN VALLEY, WITH BELMONT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

From a Sketch by the Author, 1865.

CENTENARY MEMORIALS

of the

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

in

ABERDEEN

Founded in
George Street 1798
and transferred to
Belmont Street 1865

Written by
JOHN BULLOCH

Aberdeen
JAMES MURRAY
1898

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I OFFER
THESE MEMORIALS
TO THE
PASTOR, OFFICE-BEARERS AND MEMBERS
OF
BELMONT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
AS A
SLIGHT BROTHERLY SERVICE
RENDERED AT THEIR REQUEST.

"When once thy feet enters the Church, be bare;
"God is more there then thou; for thou art there
"Onely by His permission: then beware,
"And make thyself all reverence and fear.
"Kneeling ne'er spoil'd silk stockings; quit thy state
"All equall are within the Churche's gate."

—Herbert.

TO THE READER.

WHEN I undertook the duty confided to me of writing a short History of our church, there was more in it than met the consenting eye, and the volume is therefore larger than I had at first supposed necessary. To myself the task—if responsible and sometimes delicate — has been a pleasant one of tracing the history of the church from its inception, a hundred years ago, through its several vicissitudes and steady progress till our own day. It is an honourable record, and one of which we have no reason to be ashamed. Adhering strictly to my remit, the book is not an argument, nor an apology, nor a vindication ; but simply a narrative of occurrents and facts, diversified, I trust, by an element largely biographic of those who made the history. In this last respect the book is not a "Green Book" for recording the shortcomings of our forefathers. Rather is it a legitimate opportunity for delineating, in an uncritical and sympathetic spirit, their fairer proportions, and gratefully crediting these good men with

their best characteristics of life and service. They doubtless had the defect of their qualities and the taint of their times. The founders have been dubbed narrow, and purists. That, however, is another way of saying that the men who raised the roof-tree a century ago were men of strong convictions, Christian idealists if you will; men on whom the spiritual destitution of the world lay heavy, but whose accomplished work was, and is, their best vindication.

To them the church was almost everything — "none other but the House of God." Competing interests were not so distracting then in the little town, one-seventh of its present size, as they are to-day. May we, though living under modified conditions, be animated by the same spirit that makes for righteousness, and stimulated by the same zeal that makes for beneficence.

It has been well said that "we must not demand too much of history, for it embraces but a feeble part of the reality." I rise from the writing, as I trust you will do from the reading, finding between the lines much to enhance my conception of the character and purpose of those who bore the heat and burden of the day. Few of them possessed any outstanding talents that I can discover, or any special privileges, but they were all of them men who believed they had a mission in the world and a message for men, a

message which, with singular unselfishness, they delivered, according to their lights. In short, they possessed a passion for doing good, in modern phrase, the "enthusiasm for humanity," the sincerity of which must be measured by what they suffered and what they sacrificed for its fullest development at home and abroad.

I feel sure that the future historian of the religious progress of Aberdeen must reckon with its First Congregational Church as being conspicuous among the spiritual and intellectual forces of the 19th century.

The story told is primarily domestic in its scope and purpose, but as a church we have always been more or less in touch with our environment, and it is not improbable that its interest may extend beyond our own communion. In writing it, although I have stood on the *terra firma* of a personal knowledge extending to the greater half of the period embraced, I have had to avail myself of the assistance of several of my fellow-members for information most kindly rendered, and hereby gratefully acknowledged.

J. B.

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
I.	The Founding of the Church	1
II.	The Original Nine Members...	20
III.	A Pastorless Church	33
IV.	The Ministry of the Rev. William Stephens ...	44
V.	The Ministry of the Rev. John Philip, D.D. ...	53
VI.	The Ministry of the Rev. Alexander Thomson ...	65
VII.	The Co-Pastorate of Mr. Thomson and Mr. Arthur	82
VIII.	The Sole Ministry of the Rev. David Arthur ...	92
IX.	The Ministry of the Rev. James Barton Bell ...	107
X.	The Ministry of the Rev. James Stark, D.D. ...	110
XI.	The Agencies of the Church...	113
XII.	The Service of Praise...	132
XIII.	Notabilia	136
XIV.	Centenary Services	154
Appendix A.	... ...	163
Appendix B.	... ...	166
Appendix C.	... ...	169
Appendix D.	... ...	172
Index	... ...	174

ILLUSTRATIONS.

The Denburn Valley, with Belmont Congregational Church...	*Frontispiece.*	
		PAGE
Signatures of "The Original Nine"	*to face*	19
Rev. William Stephens	"	44
Rev. John Philip, D.D....	"	53
Rev. Alexander Thomson	"	65
Rev. David Arthur	"	92
George Street Congregational Chapel		96
Belmont Congregational Church—Front View ...	"	98
Belmont Congregational Church—Interior	"	102
Belmont Congregational Church—Back View ...	"	106
Memorial Brass of the Rev. David Arthur... ...	"	108
Rev. James Stark, D.D.	"	110
Sheret's Court Mission, 64 West North Street ...	"	123
Centenary Mission Premises, West North Street ...	"	126
Centenary Mission Hall—Interior	"	128
Rev. James Alexander Haldane	'	163

CENTENARY MEMORIALS

OF THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

IN ABERDEEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH.

THE ecclesiastical events of a hundred years ago in Aberdeen may, in a way, be deemed ancient history. But in the events to be described regarding the formation of its first Congregational Church,* it is by no means obscure history. It is seldom that the inception and early progress of an important movement are chronicled with such intelligent and loving care as have been bestowed in this case. Thanks for this to the initiative mind and the fostering hand of George Moir, whose business was that of a hosier in

* One is not to be misled by the statement in the *Aberdeen Almanac* that a "Congregational" Church existed in Aberdeen in 1791. The little company so designated were a congregation of the Bereans, a decaying body, scattered through the country. The Aberdeen section worshipped at that period in the Shiprow, and were presided over by Mr. William Robertson.

the Gallowgate. He had his successors clearly in view. He had a prophetic consciousness that he and his friends were making history, a history that would be read with interest in future times. He says in the preface to the Minute Book :—

"The people of God, under all dispensations, have seen it their duty, and found it their advantage, to observe His providential dealings. . . . . In the rise and progress of some churches or congregations there is nothing remarkable, but yet, as the Lord looks after the little flock, and as nothing is little n which He is concerned, it can never be improper to take notice of those events which relate to the rise of congregations, however common they may appear; besides, something is due to posterity, who may perhaps be pleased and profited by meditating on the chain of events, which may appear more interesting as more links are discovered, and this may be the case after we have gone down to the place of silence."

However interesting to us is George Moir's possession of the historical faculty, that was not the quality that gained him such influence with his contemporaries, and induced them to embark in the enterprise of church founding.

He was gifted with the qualities of a leader. He was trusted as one whose zeal was not without knowledge, as one whose faith in God and in His cause was strong, and whose personal piety was contagious in its fervency and utter sincerity. The important proposals he advanced were felt by his friends to be reasonable, deliberate, and well grounded. Their grounding lay in the religious condition of Scotland, and especially

of the National Church of that day. It is now generally admitted to have been deplorable. That the other religious bodies were more or less affected with the prevailing deadness may be inferred from the following passage in the first Minute Book of the Church :—

"For some time past several persons have observed and lamented that most churches or parties are remarkably strict in demanding assent and subscription to human creeds and confessions of faith—remarkably lax in their enquiries into the knowledge—experience—and moral character of such as desire admission—remarkably languid and indifferent about the one thing needful, and remarkably zealous about some things needless."

In this indictment Mr. Moir shadows forth his own high ideal of what a church should be, and, animated by strong convictions on the subject, at once devotes himself to its realization. The task was delicate and difficult, but he brought to its accomplishment all the resources of a warm heart and an informed mind, and freely gave to it time and means, strength and influence.

But there was not a little to encourage him in his project. An evangelical protest was being muttered. The missionary spirit was astir. A religious renaissance was maturing. Revival was in the air. Good men and true were already afield, going up and down the land preaching a simple and unaccustomed gospel. For some years this had been going on in the south, but in 1796 Captain Haldane* came north on one of his preaching tours. Mr. Moir had not only heard him

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* For an account of the brothers Haldane, see Appendix A.

in Aberdeen, but had conversed with him on the subject so near his heart, that of an "independent meeting." That he received distinct encouragement from Captain Haldane must be gratefully admitted. At the same time, it is obvious that Moir's action was not impulsive —due to the excitement of the moment—but deliberative, and largely independent of adventitious aid.

Mr. Moir was himself a member of the Wesleyan connexion, but, in the course of his researches and reading, had come to conceive "a high opinion of the Protestant dissenters called Independents." In his first letter to Mr. Haldane he took occasion to explain his ecclesiastical bias, as well as his doctrinal views. Among other things he had declared himself a "moderate Calvinist." Mr. Haldane's reply (6th Jan., 1797) comments thus on the phrase:—"I own myself at a loss to understand the expression, but one thing I know . . . it will be understood as another name for Arminianism. I believe there are very many pious people in Mr. Wesley's connexion who avow Arminianism. At the same time I think them in an error." The two correspondents never saw eye to eye on this point.

The doctrinal basis of "moderate Calvinism" seems to have been reached by way of compromise. After much discussion the brethren frankly and amicably admitted to each other the difficulty of reaching a settlement, and *thus* the Arminianism of the Wesleyans met the Calvinism of the Seceders.*

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* Mr. Moir mentions that, some years before taking any action, "we had read the writings of Dr. Doddridge and Watts, &c., which

Mr. Moir's next step towards the practical working out of his ideas was in taking two trusted friends into his confidence. The first of these was Mr. Alexander Innes, dyer.* Between the hosier and the dyer there had probably subsisted a close business intimacy, so honourable as to beget mutual confidences and promote common aspirations. Both were diligent in business, fervent in spirit; and to men of Christian character it was an easy transition from the business affairs of time to those of eternity. The topics discussed were the state of religion, the necessity for the cultivation of the religious life, the progress of missions, the new movements on behalf of Sabbath Schools. In these matters they were like-minded, and, as they approached the serious question of forming a new church, they found that they had much in common. Both were already dissenters, the one being a Wesleyan and the other an Antiburgher. The other person who was admitted to share in these communings was a common friend, Mr. William Stephen, a shipbuilder at Footdee.

After "occasional interviews and conversations," these three friends became more intimate with each other till, at length, on Friday, the 15th of September, 1797, their first formal meeting was held for the special

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contributed greatly to our favourable opinion of their party. Since that time we became readers of the *Evangelical* and *Missionary Magazines*, by which much useful information was obtained respecting the *rise* and progress of many congregations. From these and similar publications we were led to conclude that the Lord was in a peculiar manner carrying on His own work among the Independents."

* Mr. Innes's dye-house still stands in the street to which he has given his name.

purpose of considering what action might be taken. Mr. Moir opened the meeting, held probably in his own house, by engaging in prayer. A letter was drawn up and addressed to Dr. Stafford, of Chiswell Street Congregational Church, London. Dr. Stafford's name had appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine* as one of a committee appointed to promote village preaching in England. The letter both gave and requested information. Dr. Stafford was made aware of the religious views of the subscribers, and also of their situation. Then followed eight * questions respecting the sentiments, discipline, &c., of the Independents, whether Dr. Stafford thought they could obtain a minister to make a trial at Aberdeen, and how they should proceed meanwhile. Before this first meeting broke up, an important rule was adopted, "that no person should be admitted into our meetings either as hearer or member without being mentioned in a previous meeting and approved by all present." George Moir then proposed

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* The eight questions propounded to Dr. Stafford were:

I. Are all the students in your academies men who never followed secular employments?

II. Do all the students go through a regular course of classical education?

III. Do all the students adhere to Calvinistic doctrine?

IV. Do these ministers assist one another on sacramental occasions?

V. Do the congregations choose deacons to consult with the minister in all things respecting the church?

VI. What qualifications are requisite to the admission of members?

VII. As to salary.

VIII. Would it be possible to get a young man of moderate sentiments?

Patrick Morison, hosier, Gilcomston, as a member, to which there were no objections. They "parted in love, committing the cause into the hands of Jesus, who alone can send faithful labourers into His vineyard."

Such is the record of this memorable meeting of "but three." It contained the germs of success. With what modesty, however, and caution is their zeal moderated. George Moir, although a Wesleyan, and probably a class leader, and certainly accustomed to public speaking, is no demagogue, and makes no claim to the pastoral office, whatever fitness he may have had for the high calling. His task was that of grounding his friends, and, through them, whoever might adhere to them, in those first principles and high ideals which had been an inspiration to himself.

From these memorials and enquiries one clearly perceives the spirit and aims of the worthy men heading the enterprise. Had they cared to formulate their views of an ideal church, they would have expressed their solicitude that the constituent members should be men and women with positive religious convictions—convictions, of course, which should find their natural expression in a consistent life and character. Then having regard to the pastorate—to the men who were looked to, as the spiritual forces of the movement—there was an equal anxiety that they, too, should be men of character and enlightenment—men more or less of disciplined minds, and who had entered the ministry having felt a call to it.

At the next meeting (29th Sept.) three new members were admitted — Ebenezer Gibb, shipbuilder; Peter Black, shipbuilder, Footdee; and Alexander Clinterty,

merchant, Gilcomston, bringing the total number up to seven. These all met on the 6th of October to hear Dr. Stafford's reply to their letter. It gave them peculiar satisfaction. Dr. Stafford answered carefully all their questions, and, in the matter of obtaining a preacher, referred them to Dr. Williams, Tutor at Rotherham. Draft letters to both these gentlemen were written, and before the meeting closed an eighth member was proposed, namely, James Stewart, weaver, Belmont Street.

The three original members—Moir, Innes and Stephen—were old friends, and perfectly conversant and in accord with each other's views, but the other brethren who had been admitted to "the meeting" had been included on the sole responsibility of their respective proposers, with whom alone they had intimate acquaintance. This state of matters fell to be corrected by a proposal—made in order to lay a proper foundation for what might follow, that every member should state before his brethren the following particulars—the presuppositions of a Christian Brotherhood :—

1st. A brief account of the way in which he was led to any concern about religion, and an account of his own experience in divine things, at least as far as he saw proper and felt liberty in his mind.

2nd. A brief account of his present sentiments respecting the essential doctrines of Christianity.

3rd. An account of those things which he is dissatisfied with in the party to which he belongs, and the reasons which induce him to desire admission among the Independents.

The proposal was adopted by the seven members present, George Moir being the first to comply with its conditions. On concluding his statement, he invited questions on any point that he had not made quite clear. "Some of the brethren then asked his views of man's ability, while in a natural state, to comply with the terms of the Gospel." Having satisfied his interrogators, he put the question to the meeting whether they were willing to receive him as a brother and Church Member, to which they all replied, "We are willing." Alexander Innes and William Stephen, on the same occasion (13th Oct., 1797) went through the same formula, and were both admitted on like terms. The "Meeting" at this point was composed of three persons; a week later it included five; a week later two more were admitted; but it was not till 5th January, 1798, by the admission of Alexander Clinterty and William Paul, cotton weaver, that the number was brought up to nine, at which figure the membership stood until the church was formally organised in the September following. That the nine did not, prior to that time, consider themselves a church may be gathered from the fact that they spoke of themselves as *intended members.*

This action of the founders of the church was no idle ceremony, no mechanical posturing. It was the result of a wise instinct, which finds its best expression in the query, "How can two walk together if they be not agreed?" It expressed the intellectual assent of the members to certain bases of belief. They went farther, and, feeling the vital importance of conduct, demanded of each other not only a formal avowal of

this, but gave each other evidences that in their walk and conversation they were consistent and worthy of each other's confidence.

Meantime the friends continued to meet on Friday evenings only, "when it was expected all would attend unless necessarily prevented." But, having written to several ministers in England, including Dr. Bogue of Gosport, any of whom might, without much warning, send a preacher to them, they rented the "Burgess Hall,"* where they could worship on Sunday, and as doubtless they had strongly wished to do, whether under a pastor or not. At the same time it was resolved to be on the outlook for a site on which to erect a "small chapel," or to negociate for any suitable building that might come into the market.

On the 21st December, 1797, George Moir feued ground on the west side of George Street. It is described as on "the Great North Road, now making out," and was part of the Loch-lands; lands rescued from an old time loch (called the "Marrisch" on Parson Gordon's map of the town, dated 1651). Loch Street of to-day is at once a reminder of the loch, and so far at least indicates its conformation.†

The size and boundaries of the feu are detailed on the architect's original ground plan of the chapel, thus:—"The north gable is at the extremity of our

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* This "Burgess Hall" was probably Trinity Hall, the property of the Burgesses of Trade. It stood in that district now occupied by Exchange Street, whence it was removed to the palatial buildings in Union Street.

† That the loch was still partly in existence at this time is proved by the circumstance that a man met his death by drowning in it in 1798.

ground; south gable at extremity, except six feet passage; west wall about 55 feet from extremity of our ground; east wall about 65 feet from extremity of our ground, but here we must reserve ground for a front house to the street."

The desire to interpose a house between the chapel and the public street strikes the modern mind strangely. It was probably dictated by the prudential consideration of cheapening the feu-duty. It had also in it elements both of modesty and of faith. The little society did not care to obtrude themselves prominently on the public with their homely edifice. They were to erect a building that was to possess no architectural sublimity or claims to a front site. Ampleness and utility were the essentials, and to erect a structure which could seat 700 people, and which was to cost £800,* was an act of courage in a handful of men of but moderate means. Nothing but an intelligent vision of the signs of the times, and confidence in the goodness of their cause could have justified the enterprise. They felt that their principles would be sufficiently attractive to fill the chapel, even if it had to be reached by a "pend." The retreat of the chapel, with the intervening buildings, secured the advantage of quietness, and the little brick paved courtyard secured at "kirk-skaling" an opportunity for friendly handshakings and conferences among the brethren before they merged themselves in the worldly current of the street.

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* One of the economies adopted in the building was to have the walls plastered inside, but *unlathed*. The consequence was that, when filled, the walls used to "sweat" in an unsightly manner.

On the very day that this feu was acquired an encouraging letter was received from Dr. Bogue. He advised the erection of a chapel without delay, and capable of seating at least 1000 persons. He also urged the propriety of communicating with Captain Haldane. It had been resolved to build the chapel 48½ feet by 40 feet frontage, for 700 persons, but Dr. Bogue's letter induced them to acquire 60 feet of frontage. The foundation stone of the chapel was laid on the 24th of February, 1798. Two sides of a building, to measure 49 feet square, and to hold 1000 persons, were founded when Captain Haldane's reply came, enclosing a subscription of ten guineas as a proof of his sympathy, and advising an enlargement of the plan. This advice was acted on, and a building fit to accommodate 1200 persons was proceeded with. "Perhaps," says the chronicler, "it may hereafter appear that there was a particular providence in these things."

The first moneys borrowed for the new chapel were £60 from George Moir and £40 from Ebenezer Gibb.

Considerable light is thrown on the posture of affairs at this time in Dr. Morison's life of his father, John Morison of Millseat. In an interesting letter (pp. 106-110) the latter writes to Ebenezer Gibb, who belonged to that quarter:—"I am happy to learn from your good father that matters are going on so well in Aberdeen. I am informed that the foundation of your new chapel is now laid, which, with other favourable accounts of you, gives me great satisfaction. . . . . I expect you will write as soon as convenient, and inform us how matters are going on with you in the new cause at Aberdeen." (14th March, 1798.)

Mr. Gibb thought it advisable to lay this letter before "our little circle." In remitting their long and able reply, Mr. Gibb, under date 25th April, for himself, says:—"We have many friends who heartily wish us God-speed; but there have not many come forward to join us . . . whom we could conscientiously receive as members of a society constructed upon a scriptural principle. There are not a few who come to us, Nicodemus-like, by night, for fear of the clergy, who are our declared enemies. A certain person, who avows himself an Independent, has subscribed £20 to our support, and yet he is so strange a character that we cannot receive him among us. . . . I do think that history does not record such an eventful period as the one in which we live. Oh, what portentous clouds of judgment hang over the land just ready apparently to burst forth! May they yet burst in blessings."

The letter written to the country friends, referred to by Mr. Gibb, is given in full in Dr. Morison's life of his father. It occupies eleven pages, from which the following extracts are made. The principle governing their action is stated to have been a "wish to see vital godliness and primitive Christianity—freed from the fetters and ordinances of men—everywhere prevailing and everywhere influential."

"Some of us have long been Independents* or Congregationalists in principle. . . . Others of us have only of late begun to investigate this matter, and were first led to do so by observing that *party spirit*

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* The study of Neale's *History of the Puritans* had been helpful to this end.

and the traditions of man swallowed up the zeal and attention of too many professors, . . . a real hindrance to the success of the Gospel."

"We belonged to different communions, in all which we found a rigid strictness in demanding submission to human standards of orthodoxy, but a lamentable neglect in seeking sound experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, and a life becoming His holy Gospel."

"By conversing together . . . we found that we agreed in all the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and that the Lord had fashioned our hearts alike; and were led to conclude that the love of God shed abroad in the heart is a far more scriptural and steady principle of union than a constrained belief in human creeds and confessions where genuine love is wanting."

Then follows such a narrative of their proceedings as I have given, in which they related how they had been providentially led. "But we feel the weight of the undertaking, and sometimes are ready to apprehend consequences, for the sum necessary to complete our design will be about *eight hundred pounds*, and we have but little prospect of any considerable assistance."

As to their views of the leading truths of the Gospel, they say, "Man is a fallen, corrupt being; cannot help himself; never seeks God till sought by Him. Yet, as the Lord invites, and sinners refuse, it is entirely their own blame if they perish."

"We believe that men are justified by faith only, 'without the deeds of the law.' This faith is the free gift of God, and uniformly produces good works; which works are not a title to, but a qualification for, the heavenly inheritance. In short, we believe that

salvation in its commencement, progress and completion is the free unmerited gift of God, meritoriously secured by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit."

"As to receiving members, having no pastor as yet, we are under the necessity of doing the best we can in a matter of such importance. When any person intimates his desire to unite with us his name is mentioned at our weekly prayer meeting; the brethren then take time to consider the matter, and in the interim make all prudent inquiries as to his moral character, &c. After this the name of the candidate is mentioned a second time, and if no objection is urged two of the brethren are appointed to converse with him on all matters touching religious belief and Christian experience."

"This is reported on, and, if favourably, the candidate is introduced, and, after giving a satisfactory account (1) of the way he was led to concern; (2) of his doctrinal views; and (3) of the reasons which have induced him to leave his former religious connexions, he is admitted."

"Some may think that we have made the door too straight, but we see as much care as this to be absolutely necessary. . . . We wish nothing to be made a term of church fellowship which has not been constituted such by Christ himself. . . . We wish it particularly understood that, although we be of a party, we are not *party men.* We rejoice in the late union of various denominations in attempting to spread the Gospel. We are friends to all Missionary Societies. We have our views of essential doctrines, to which we desire

most resolutely to adhere, but in all minor and non-essential matters we agree to differ. . . . We by no means desire to push ourselves into notice, but if any enquire about us, we are not ashamed of our views, exertions, or aims."

Signed on behalf of the brethren by

GEORGE MOIR and
AL. INNES.

Dr. Morison, following up this interesting letter, says:—"I should greatly rejoice were I able to supply a copy of my father's reply to the preceding communication, but I have not been able to command it. I can remember distinctly, however, that he did reply, and that he always looked upon the letter of the Aberdeen friends as a composition highly creditable to them."*

Shortly after the erection of the chapel was begun, the important question arose as to who could be got to open it. Dr. Bogue, who had proved himself so friendly, and who was a prominent man in the connexion, was invited,† but did not see his way to come,

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* I am glad to be able to reproduce the missing reply, which I found among the church papers, but in order to avoid interrupting this narrative, it is given in the Appendix B.

† Dr. Bogue took a deep interest in the movement. He was a native of Scotland, where he was educated for the ministry of the Church of Scotland, of which he was a licensed preacher. He went to London in 1771, after graduating at Edinburgh University. He joined the Independents, and settled at Gosport. There he became the tutor of an academy for the education of young men for the ministry. An address, published by him in 1794, is deemed the precursor of the London Missionary Society, which was formed in the following year.

but he recommended Dr. (then Mr.) James Bennett, of Romsey, Hants. In agreeing to the invitation of the brethren, Dr. Bennett thought it advisable to warn them that the expense would be heavy—the long journey, with paid supply for the few weeks they desired him to stay, bringing it up to £15 or more. Mr. Haldane was informed, and approved of the proposal of having the "Meeting House"* opened by Dr. Bennett. He wrote:—"It will be a means of giving you more respectability in the eyes of the world, which, although not to be too much sought after, is not wholly to be despised." He further generously asks Mr. Moir to draw on him and his brother for twenty guineas towards the cause.

Dr. Bennett, before setting out, is careful to impress on the friends that "The Church of Christ is not a worldly institution, composed of the common mass of the people; not made up of the world, but chosen out of the world." How completely these

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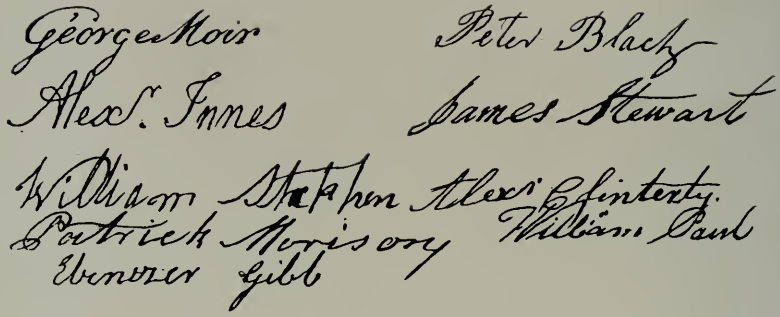
On that occasion he preached a powerful sermon, opening it with the remarkable words, spoken with a dignity all his own, "We are called this evening to the funeral of bigotry, and I hope it will be buried so deep as never to rise again." The effect on the audience was electric. Dr. Bennett, who also was present, says:—"Such a scene, perhaps, was never beheld in our world." At the formation of the Religious Tract Society, five years later, Dr. Bogue was again asked to preach the opening sermon. He enjoyed the entire confidence of his contemporaries as one possessed of the too rare combination of the erudition of the scholar with the eloquent fervency of the evangelist. As an author, he is best known by his work on *Inspiration*. He died in 1825.

* The church has been known under various aliases. The Haldanes sometimes addressed themselves to the members of "the Tabernacle." Perhaps the "Missionar Kirk" and the "Loch Kirk" were most commonly applied in the early decades of the century.

sentiments were in accord with those of the Aberdeen friends I have already noted. The real objective of his remark was probably the popular error that a Congregational Church implied the indiscriminate admission of members.

Within six months from laying the foundation, the chapel was ready for occupation. Dr. Bennett came north for a few weeks, and performed the opening services on the 2nd of September (1798), by preaching three times. The opening sermon was from the text, Exodus, chap. xxxiii., verse 14, "And he said my presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." The afternoon text was 1st Timothy, chap. i., verse 8, "The glorious Gospel of the blessed God." In the evening he preached from the words "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." (John xii., v. 32.) It must have been a great encouragement to the promoters of the movement to find that the enterprise in which they were engaged was creating a widespread interest. On the opening day the chapel was crowded at all the three services, many being unable to obtain admission.

A fortnight later, on the 16th September, there is in the Minute Book an entry described in the rubric as "Forming and organising the Church." Dr. Bennett preached on the occasion, from Matt., chap. xviii., v. 15-17, "If thy brother shall trespass," &c. In it he fully explained and defended the Congregational mode of church government. At the conclusion of the sermon the nine brethren who had hitherto considered themselves as members of *the meeting* "stood up and avowed the Congregational discipline," and their



The Signatures of the

NINE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH,

Attached to a Statement of Principles on which they united in fellowship.

relation to each other as Church members, by giving to each other the right hand of fellowship. At the same time Dr. Bennett came down from the pulpit, and gave the "right hand" to all the members of the new and little church whose names, in the order of their admission, were :—

GEORGE MOIR, Hosier, Gallowgate.
ALEXANDER INNES, Dyer, Gallowgate-head.
WILLIAM STEPHEN, Shipbuilder, Footdee.
PATRICK MORISON, Hosier, Gilcomston.
EBENEZER GIBB, Shipbuilder.
PETER BLACK, Shipbuilder.
ALEXANDER CLINTERTY, Merchant, Gilcomston.
JAMES STEWART, Weaver, Belmont Street.
WILLIAM PAUL, Cotton Weaver.

The simple service concluded by prayer and the singing of Dr. Watts' hymn :—

Zion 's a garden, walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground ;
A little spot, enclosed by grace,
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

At a special church meeting, which was held on Tuesday, 25th September, Dr. Bennett again presided, and an election of the first deacons took place, by ballot, which was cast almost unanimously for George Moir and Alexander Innes. Dr. Bennett, after addressing them on the duties of the deacons, chiefly to provide all needful things for the Table of the Lord, the Table of the Minister, and the Table of the Poor, especially the Sick Poor, solemnly commended them in prayer.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORIGINAL NINE MEMBERS.

EVERY human corporate movement takes its colour from those who gave it impulse. The personal equation is of the first importance in determining and judging of its character and sweep. If to understand the men be to understand the movement, it is then not only natural but incumbent to delineate, as far as it is possible after the lapse of a century, those who with leal-hearted devotion founded the church. It has never been suggested that they had any selfish end in view. Their object was the highest good of the greatest number, and in standing shoulder to shoulder for it, against the obloquy and ostracism to which they were subjected, they showed that they were men of grit and of moral seriousness.

Of the founders as a group, there are several estimates by contemporaries. Dr. John Morison of London writes of them as "a little band of men chiefly connected with the Secession, who had begun to feel and lament its narrow and restrictive spirit." Captain Haldane knew the men well, and they possessed his confidence. Though not in the least given to merely complimentary

language, in an early letter he commends them thus—"I believe your design [in promoting the cause] was set on foot, and has been conducted in simplicity and godly sincerity, and, if so, I am persuaded He who walks amid the candlesticks will direct you to a pastor after His own heart."

GEORGE MOIR, the founder and first deacon of the church, was a native of Skene, and was born on the 29th June, 1764. Of his antecedents I know nothing but that his mother was a Jaffray. He came to Aberdeen as a boy of thirteen, and I can gather that he was clerk or traveller to Provost Abercrombie, who was a stocking manufacturer. In 1799 the Provost's business gave way, and Mr. Moir appears to have taken up the retail hosiery trade on his own account. For that period he seems to have received a good education, a circumstance, coupled with his early establishment in business, which points to the comfortable circumstances in which he had been reared. He became a Burgess of Guild in 1796. There is abundant evidence that he was a thoughtful, intelligent man, fairly entitled to the often loosely awarded epithet, "well read."* He also had the habit of the pen, and has a good claim to authorship, although his *works* have never been

* He was essentially a student, as the following testifies:—"Thanks to Thee for those good books I fell in with, especially James Hervey's, the smoothness of whose style and sweetness of whose subject first induced me to read divinity books, particularly Watts, Doddridge, Baxter, Scott, Henry, Brown, Beveridge, Young, Scougal, Adams, Erskine, Wesley, Fletcher, Jenks, Marshall, Halliburton, Flavel, Rutherford, Whitefield, Willison, Tertullian, Gouge, Bunyan, McEwan, Newton, Hervey."—*Diary*, 1st Jan., 1790.

published. They consist of an *Occasional Diary*, of much interest, and an incomplete series of letters, designed for his children, on the subject of Religion, and entitled *A Poor Father's Legacy.* I have seen a common-place book in which he was in the habit of recording not only extracts from the books he had read, but sentiments and opinions of his own. These were methodically classified under distinctive headings, a storehouse of readily available subject matter — the tabulated gleanings of a man at once reflective and cultivated. I am happy to possess a MS. volume, entirely of his own composition. In it there are no fewer than fifty-three poetical pieces. The art of versifying was begun, he says in a preface, when "very young," as early as twelve years of age, and it was one in which he attained considerable proficiency. He was encouraged in the practice by the fact that some of his early "sportive and insignificant" pieces were published in a periodical of the day. Having "*changed his sentiments*," he began to write pieces of a graver character, but to his grief "the editor would not print them." The volume is to a certain extent autobiographic. He seems to lay no great store by his poetic efforts. They were largely thought out and composed on horseback in the course of his frequent journeys in the country in pursuit of his business. "If they are not reason," he says, "they are rhyme, and if the interests of Piety are safe I am little concerned about those of Poetry." From this remark the reader may readily gather that the themes are for the most part serious and religious in caste, contemplative and introspective. They are not without literary art, are always

rhythmic, and written in an interesting variety of metres. They plainly suggest acquaintance both with George Herbert and Francis Quarles. In the lighter efforts there exists a distinct vein of humour. Nowhere is this better seen than in the prose dedication of the volume to himself. On the whole, one rises from a perusal of the volume with the conviction that the author's true place, in his happy use of measured language, was that of a hymn-writer. The following is a fair sample of his muse. It is entitled—

A SABBATH MORNING REFLECTION.

Once more the blessed day I see,
When Jesus Christ, who died for me,
Arose triumphantly—
The dreary regions of the dead,
Could not confine my living Head,
Or else my hopes would die.

Awake my eyes, arouse my heart,
Dull drowsiness away depart,
For Jesus early rose—
At early dawn He left His grave,
And all His en'mies did outbrave,
And vanquished all my foes.

The pious Marys early sought,
This Jesus who their pardon bought,
Before the shadows fled.
To the S'pulchre where He lay,
They took the solitary way,
And thought He still was dead.

But lo! an angel blazing bright,
In vestments of the purest white,
Addressed the plaintive pair—
Ye seek the Lord, be not afraid,
He now is risen—as He said;
Come, see, the Lord lay there.

But go and tell His friends the same,
And mention Peter out by name,
Lest he be sore cast down—
Though sin may hide His face a while,
When sinners weep the Lord will smile,
'Tis force that makes Him frown.

But am I sure that He was raised?
Yes, for the Galileans gazed
While up to Heaven He flew.
And am I sure He'll come again?
Yes, for His promise must remain
A truth—if God be true.

We are without data as to when or under what circumstances George Moir "changed his sentiments," but when still a young man he is at least writing pieces of a serious vein. He had been a most consistent member of the Methodist Church, but felt obliged to withdraw, being "unhinged by some things which have happened" amongst them. This was just before taking action in the formation of our church. So early as 1792 George Moir was favourably known as a public-spirited man, a man of practical benevolence. In that year he had the honour to found a charity, which for 106 years has pursued an unbroken, quiet, unostentatious career of kindly beneficence, under the quaint title of THE SICK MAN'S FRIEND SOCIETY. "Whosoever" (says Martineau) "has received of Heaven the suggestion of some practical deed of goodness, or sacrifice, or mercy, bears a burden which he can never lay down." In the last decades of the 18th century the condition of the poor was piteous. The relief afforded by the churches was inadequate. In those days there was no Poor Law to afford relief, and no Poor's Association to extend a helping hand. The "suggestion" which George Moir received in considering the case of the poor was, that some organized effort should be made to meet their wants, and this burden he induced a number of benevolent

fellow-citizens to share with himself.* Their plan was the self-imposed one of contributing at least a "weekly penny" to a common fund, which was dispensed by the members, on visiting the poor at their homes, in "one shilling at a time." In this way the Poor Laws and the Poor's Association were both anticipated.

Among the many ways in which George Moir helped the church in its early years, was in placing his home at the disposal of the numerous "supplies" who came to officiate. What kind of a home that was may be gleaned from a verse of the poem, "Wrote when I took up House":—

> "Oh, let this humble house of mine
> Be under Thy peculiar care;
> And, as a little church of Thine,
> Be daily sanctified with prayer."

It was a veritable "prophet's chamber," where an open-handed hospitality was extended to all. Mr. Haldane tenders his thanks for accommodating itinerants. Dr. Bogue's helpful advice and counsel were not forgotten, and although he was never here to share the hospitality of the house, we find him courteously thanking Mrs. Moir for the present she had sent him—possibly some

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* "This day above twenty persons met to testify their approbation of the Society called 'The Sick Man's Friend,' which was begun by myself and Wm. Troup, in January last, and these men seemed very hearty in it, so that our first contribution amounted to upwards of £2 5s. Our managers were chosen and our meetings appointed. I hope this charitable institution will be supported in Aberdeen by such as the Lord will give ability and inclination.

> The Sick Man's Friend is now begun,
> Lord send it down from son to son."

—*Diary*, 23rd Nov., 1792.

grateful samples of the famous Aberdeen hose. Mrs. Moir was a true helpmeet—a mother in Israel, and to whom the young cause was not a little indebted. After her husband's death she conducted his business successfully for many years. It is obviously to her that the following verse refers:—

> "So well our inclinations join,
> That one way both our wills incline
> As if we had one soul;
> For whatsoever one thinks fit,
> The other thinks—or doth submit
> Without the least control."

In the midst of this good man's many activities and interests the heavy hand of disease and death was laid on him. After a protracted illness, on the 16th Nov., 1802, at the comparatively early age of 38, he closed a career, poor in years but rich in experiences and in service. He was predeceased by three children, and survived by two, a son and a daughter, the latter of whom was a member of the church till her death, some 30 years ago.

Referring to our early history, Dr. Lindsay Alexander in his life of his relative, Rev. John Watson, from whom he doubtless drew his inspiration, thus characterizes George Moir:—

"The leader . . . was George Moir, an individual in comparatively humble circumstances, and without much education, but a man to whom God had given an unusual share of natural ability, firmness and energy, and whose piety was of that vigorous and elevated cast, which, without having the slightest sympathy with fanatical enthusiasm, rises instinctively and irre-

pressively above the trammels of human authority in religion, and the mockery of a dry formalism."

Mr. King quotes the estimate of one who was a contemporary with Moir. He calls him "a man of excellent natural abilities, which he had cultivated with great industry by reading and otherwise." In 1848, when a jubilee service was proposed, Dr. Bennett was invited to be present to take part, as he had done 50 years before. He declined on account of age, but wrote a letter to Mr. Arthur, in which he refers to George Moir as "one of the best men he ever knew." Without farther extending this biography, I may say that, in the study of George Moir's character—his intense piety, his knowledge of the Bible, his humanity, his consecration, his mental qualities, his culture, his sagacity, his fine spirit—I have become gradually convinced that, in the long roll of those who have in any way been connected with the church, there is no more remarkable man than its founder, first in rank as well as first in time.

ALEXANDER INNES, who gave such hearty and efficient support to the young cause, belonged originally to the Anti-burgher congregation in Belmont Street. So long as George Moir lived and was able to direct things, all went well with Innes. He made an excellent lieutenant, but a leading place was not in his way. Certain difficulties arose, and in the conduct of the discussion Innes took up a strong position, by which he appears to have forfeited his influence with the brethren. He was appointed secretary of the church, but, whilst he refused to act as such, unjustly and

unreasonably retained possession of the Minute Book and of the archives of the church, till compelled to return them. He was the second deacon of the church, and remained such till its dissolution, in 1806, when he finally withdrew. Not till 1815 did he seek admission to Frederick Street Church. Some obstacles stood in the way, but after six months' delay, and several conferences with Mr. Philip of the "Loch Chapel," Mr. Penman, and Mr. Innes, it was agreed to let all past differences be forgotten, and he was received. Mr. Innes died in 1840, and the minute characterises him as "the much respected brother—Treasurer, Deacon, and Trustee—offices all of which he had filled with credit to himself and satisfaction to the church," to which he left a legacy of £10.

WILLIAM STEPHEN has done for himself what none of his contemporaries did for themselves. He has left a private memoir for his children, entitled, "A short account of some passages in my life, with my different views of Religion ; also some accounts of my experience and the Lord's dealings with me."* He was born at Aberdeen, 9th November, 1759, of earnest Christian parents. In early life, and even after his conversion, he says he was haunted with fits of doubt and distress on reflecting on the corruptness of his nature. At the age of eighteen he was apprenticed to the shipbuilding craft with a relative. After a time he took up business on his own account at Footdee, and was a highly

* By the courtesy of his grandson, Mr. William Stephen, shipbuilder, Linthouse, Glasgow, I have been favoured with the leading facts of the above notice.

successful shipbuilder, an industry in which his lineal descendants stand in the front rank to-day.

Until 1787 Mr. Stephen and his wife, who was a very religious woman, were members of the Established Church. In that year they joined the Wesleyan body. In March, 1797, he happened to read a tract entitled "The Nature and Evidence of Saving Faith." By it he obtained such "clear light" as led him to renounce the doctrine of Free Will. At that time he left the Methodists, "not being able to approve of their views or their discipline." In this frame of mind he joined his friends Moir and Innes, and contributed the third adherent to the new cause, which he supported actively, both as a private member and as a deacon of the church, until the troublous times of 1806. Then, in view of Arminian doctrines being tolerated in the church, he and others of Calvinistic opinions separated from it. He writes:—"We were obliged to leave it, or else do violence to our consciences." "Such," adds my informant, "were our stern forefathers." "Mr. Stephen was a man of most intense spiritual earnestness. His temptations were strong and his sense of sin almost morbidly deep. But he was strong and instant in prayer, and though he was often in great mental distress and doubt, his faith always came out of the trial clear and steadfast. With him the unseen was intensely real, and his sense of God's nearness was exceptionally vivid. At the dissolution of the church, Mr. Stephen and his wife joined the small party who ultimately formed Frederick Street Church. From that connection he withdrew in 1821, and went to Dundee, and established himself in business there. In advanced

life he removed to Edinburgh, and in 1838 to Arbroath, where he died, 21st November of that year, aged 79.

PATRICK MORISON was a friend of Mr. Moir's, by whom he was introduced to the little circle. I am without materials sufficient to enable me to characterise him, but there is abundant evidence to prove him a man of superior intelligence. He remained loyal to the church, taking his full share of church life, both as a member and a deacon, up to at least 1828. He is still represented in the membership by his great-grand-daughter, Mrs. Johnston K. Pirie.

EBENEZER GIBB was a member of a strenuous seceding family at Millseat, New Deer. His father, William Gibb, was a man of intelligent piety, as his letters prove. After coming to Aberdeen, Ebenezer Gibb appears to have made the acquaintance of Alexander Innes, who proposed his admission to the little society in whose early history he took such a lively interest. Gibb was a foreman to William Stephen, shipbuilder, and his death was the result of an accident he met with in his business some seven years before. He died in his native place. A grandson of the same name is now a member of the church, as well as Mrs. Robert Smith, a grand-niece.

ALEXANDER CLINTERTY is perhaps the least prominent of the original nine. He was proposed by Patrick Morison, and his wife and daughter were early members of the church. He adhered to Dr. Philip when the church was re-formed. He is described as a merchant, and had his place of business in the

Short Loanings, then considered as in the "town of Gilcomston." The Misses Levy, members of the church, are grand-daughters of Alexander Clinterty, whose daughter married James Rose. The daughter of the latter married Mr. Levy, a captain in the merchant service, one of our oldest members. Clinterty died before 1819.

PETER BLACK, in Footdee,* was introduced to "the meeting" by his friend, William Stephen, with whom he was closely associated, if not a partner in business, as shipbuilders. He belonged to the Kingswells district, and was the son of one of the stalwart pynours of Aberdeen. Peter himself was a powerful man, of six feet in height. I am unaware to what church he originally belonged, but he is described by a descendant as having been "somewhat puritanical" in his views. He was particularly strict in the matter of Sabbath observance, and has been known to go to church with dirty shoes rather than have them cleaned on the Lord's Day. So far did he carry his

* I cannot refrain from narrating a happy incident in connection with these notes about Peter Black. Having found myself without a vestige of information, I had written "Of Peter Black *I know nothing.*" On the following day a stranger accosted me, and engaged my attention on a subject in which he was interested. I asked his name, which he gave, as well as his father's, and he volunteered to say that his grandfather was Peter Black. "You do not mean to tell me," I asked, "that your grandfather was one of the founders of George Street Church?" "I do, indeed," he said. I then told him how, in writing this history, I had been baffled to obtain any information about his ancestor, and to my query, what he knew about him, got the reply "Everything." From that providential "everything," I gleaned from the man on the street the substance of my sketch.

Sabbatarianism that "he would have punished a cat on Monday if he had known it to have caught a mouse on Sunday." Mr. Black seems to have been in good circumstances, and was a Burgess of Guild. His wife never joined the church, and at the "new modelling" his own name is dropt out.

JAMES STEWART was from the country, and "when he came to Aberdeen joined himself to Mr. Bryce's congregation. However, not finding things as he wished, he left them, and joined himself to the Wesley Methodists, among whom he continued for eight years, a part of which time he was a class leader." He is designated as a "weaver, Belmont Street." Since I remember, a cotton factory there occupied the site of the present Free Churches, and in it Stewart had been employed. When our chapel was built, James was appointed "chief door-keeper," and at his death, in 1801, he is described as "a zealous, warm-hearted Christian."

WILLIAM PAUL, cotton weaver, was the last of the original nine to be admitted. He was an attached member of the church, and succeeded James Stewart as principal door-keeper, a post he held till his death. His son, Alexander Paul, succeeded him in that duty.

Such are the brief personal memorials of the men who, a century ago, banded themselves together and became the responsible founders of the church; and a certain historical interest will always surround their names.

CHAPTER III.

A PASTORLESS CHURCH.

THE first regular monthly meeting of the church was held on Friday, 28th September — Dr. Bennett presiding. Nine persons were admitted, which at once doubled the membership. Among them were seven women, of whom were the wives of four of the founders—William Stephen, William Paul, Alexander Innes and George Moir. The first woman to be admitted was Mrs. Henderson, whose husband was admitted at the same time.

Whilst Dr. Bennett was in Aberdeen, the town's autumnal Sacrament services were held, preceded, as usual, by a Fast Day. Of the condition of the chapel, the character of the service held that evening, and of Dr. Bennett himself we are happy to possess a very interesting account from the able pen of Dr. Lindsay Alexander. It occurs in his life of the Rev. John Watson, the acknowledged founder, and for 32 years the devoted secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland. At the time in question (September, 1798), Watson was a youth of 22, who had recently left his native Belhelvie, and who was working at the trade of a baker. Mr. Watson was a member of the Established

Church, and, having attended service in the forenoon of the Fast Day, had become deeply impressed by the peculiar fervour with which Dr. Kidd, then Sabbath Evening Lecturer at Trinity Chapel, had engaged in prayer. In this susceptible state of mind, Mr. Watson found himself, for the first time, among the crowd who had assembled in the Missionar Kirk to hear Dr. Bennett. So indelibly had the whole scene and services impressed themselves on his memory that 45 years afterwards, on the occasion of the first meeting of the Congregational Union in Aberdeen, Mr. Watson recalled them with ease and interest. The primitive and unfinished condition of the chapel is described. "The galleries had not as yet been finished; only the benches had been fixed; no division of seats had been made; no book-boards had been erected, and no parapet front had been introduced. From the anterior joists of the gallery, on which as many sat with pendulous limbs as could find space, back to the wall, was one unbroken mass of human beings, closely wedged together, and covering every inch of room. Through the crowded passages below, the preacher had with difficulty to make his way to the pulpit. Not far short of 1500 persons were gathered that evening within a space which had been calculated only for 1000." The preacher is thus characterised:—"Dr. Bennett was then in the bloom of early manhood, and a transient murmur of surprise and pleasure passed through the crowded mass, when his graceful and expressive countenance* appeared in the pulpit. A

* One of the speakers at the Union Meeting where these details were given, referred to the "*beautiful* Dr. Bennett!"

voice of exquisite melody, and the intonations of which were at once natural and skilful, helped materially to prolong and increase the charm, so that during the entire service the utmost stillness on the part of the audience prevailed." But the supreme interest of the occasion culminates in Mr. Watson's diffident account of how he was personally affected by the earnest and faithful appeals of the preacher. Dr. Bennett's text was "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii., 14). The truth came home to Mr. Watson's mind with power. It was "something quite new," and he derived a knowledge of the nature and importance of religion he did not possess before. Mr. Watson continued to attend the church, and in 1800, along with an intimate friend in his own trade, became a member. Mr. Watson early conceived the idea of entering the ministry, and to enable him to do so began business on his own account, by which, in the course of a very few years, he saved as much as enabled him to enter on study, a course to which his minister, Mr. Stephens, encouraged him heartily. His subsequent career is outwith the scope of these memorials; suffice it to say that Mr. Watson proved a valuable acquisition, and that his "praise is in all the churches."

At the first communion of the church, dispensed probably by Dr. Bennett, on the last day of September, twenty persons "sat down," being the whole membership, with the addition of two Baptist brethren, Messrs. Coles and Page, from Bristol, students at Marischal College. The circumstantial chronicler of the interesting occasion remarks that "It was a very uncommon thing

in this place to see a congregation of a thousand people, and only twenty communicants, for in all the churches or parties here the whole congregation are communicants, at least with very few exceptions."

The names of these two young men (Messrs. Coles and Page) appear frequently in the early church records, as well as in the correspondence of the various English supplies, who knew them before, or who made their acquaintance when in Aberdeen. Taking them in the order in which their names most frequently recur, Thomas Coles is described in the University Records as the son of the late William Coles, Gloucestershire, and Henry Page as the son of John Page, Esq., Bristol. They were the only English students in their class, and one cannot help wondering what inducements they could have had to come to Marischal College, Aberdeen, from the far-away banks of the Severn.

The circumstance reminds us of the fact that the great Baptist preacher, Robert Hall, had himself been a distinguished alumnus of King's College, Aberdeen. He left in 1785 to fill the post of classical tutor in Bristol Academy. It is in this way extremely likely that Messrs. Coles and Page, who were Baptists, had been pupils of Mr. Hall, and, coming under his powerful personal influence, acted on his advice as to the choice of their Alma Mater. That their education was in a forward state may be inferred from the fact that the young men entered as second year's students. They graduated M.A. in 1800. During their College course they both engaged actively in Christian work, especially that of the Sunday School. Gloucester was the cradle of the movement and the system, with which young men of their type would naturally be familiar.

Ebenezer Gibb, referring to them, says :—"They are very godly men, who often attend our prayer meeting. Each of them teaches a school, and the people tread upon one another to hear them. I went to hear one of them last Sabbath evening, who teaches in St. Mary's Hill, below the East Church. I think there were about 1000 people present."

It is not saying too much that there was surely a Providence guiding these young and ardent spirits to Aberdeen just at the time when the infant church stood in need of all the stimulus they seemed so fitted and willing to infuse.

All this is freely acknowledged in a minute of 1st September, 1799, on which day they had both preached in the church. "These two young men have attended the University in this place for about two years, and their advice, assistance, and exertions for the cause of Christ in this city and neighbourhood have been useful to many, and especially to us in our infant state." I have unfortunately been unable to trace their subsequent careers.

Meanwhile the church was gradually adding to its membership. By the end of 1799 the original nine had become forty-nine members.

The first baptism is thus registered, under date 22nd April, 1799:—"This day George Moir, hosier in Aberdeen, and Ann Smith, his wife, both members of this church, had a son born, named George, baptised by Mr. Moseley of Longbuckley, Northamptonshire. The ordinance was performed in the chapel in the forenoon."

The next has an interest of its own. It is thus

recorded, on 9th August, 1799:—"This evening Jean Hervie, a young woman of about twenty years of age, was baptised by Mr. Garie. She was formerly a quaker, but having of late become thoughtfull about her soul, she requested admittance to be a member with us, and it was judg'd proper that she should be baptised before she was received."

The first death in the membership is thus entered, on 11th June, 1800:—"Death has already diminished our number. Jean Gordon took her leave of mortality this morning. She was admitted a member of this church on the 9th of August, 1799."*

After Dr. Bennett's departure the serious duty of the young church was the securing a suitable pastor. This involved a voluminous and delicate correspondence, a task ably conducted by Mr. Moir.† The Haldanes

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* The practice of recording births and deaths was very soon discontinued. Strange to say, while resignations and exclusions from the membership were carefully noted, the recording of the deaths of members was not resumed for about fifty years.

† He enumerates some few things which have occupied him since the commencement of the "new meeting." (1) I have wrote above 170 letters to ministers; (2) I have kept a register of every important thing concerning the church and congregation; (3) I have kept a regular account of the receipts and expenditure to the amount of £1500; (4) I have attended the following meetings:—

Sabbath Morning—Prayer Meeting, either at the chapel, at Old Aberdeen, or Gilcomstone.
" Evening—Taught a Sabbath School, 6-8.
Monday—Missionary Prayer Meeting.
Tuesday—Fellowship Meeting.
Wednesday—Sabbath School Meeting.

Besides this he acted as Treasurer to the Sabbath School Society.—*Moir's Diary*, 21st July, 1800.

proved themselves very helpful in the way of procuring or suggesting preachers "with a view." One serious drawback to ready supply was the fact that it was to England that the church had to look for men likely to suit the circumstances, and in those days it was no light undertaking to come so far north; indeed, in some cases it was held to be prohibitive. Dr. Bennett, in announcing his own safe arrival at home (Romsey), "notwithstanding a breakdown of the mail between Perth and Dundee," considerately asks Mr. Moir to prevent his successor from going to the Sabbath School after preaching [three times a day?]. "It will not do for his health," he adds, "and you must persuade him to wrap himself up in flannel in your northern air." He was speaking from a September experience, and it was now November.

Before the year was out the Haldanes had set on foot a scheme for training young men for the ministry of the Congregational Churches. Mr. Greville Ewing was bestirring himself in the cause of home missionary and evangelistic work, and undertook the theological education of the students, and Robert Haldane had generously undertaken to pay £25 towards each student's expenses. The scheme, however, had to mature, and in the meantime supply had to be looked for elsewhere.*

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* "I have a prospect of the privilege of sitting under an English Independent minister, as there is great probability of one coming down at the request of some persons (whereof I am one) who are uniting together for that purpose. This I have been wishing for ever since I read Doddridge's works, and especially since I read *Neale's History of the Puritans*."—*Moir's Diary*, Oct., 1797.

The first to supply was Mr. Thomas Loader, of Fordingbridge, who remained about two months. Mr. Slatterie followed him on one Sabbath, and was so approved that the members of the church signed a call to him to settle in Aberdeen. This, however, was declined in a letter dated 25th February, 1799. Mr. Slatterie received a guinea for his day's preaching, which brings a rebuke from Robert Haldane for "lavishness." Mr. Slatterie was a powerful preacher, an able and eloquent man. He was settled at Chatham, and was long known in that quarter as "the Apostle of Kent."

Mr. Wydown, of York, supplied in the early weeks of 1799, and was followed by Mr. Edward Parsons, of Leeds.

The Rev. Mr. Moseley, of Longbuckley, Northampton, supplied during April, 1799. He had been well recommended by Mr. Parsons, but Robert Haldane, who had seen Mr. Moseley at Edinburgh, on his way north, did not think he would do. He spoke of him as a *nervous* man, so much so that "he could not ride in an open country without being near a hedge or wall; nor could he walk down a steep hill." Mr. Moseley "felt great uneasiness in crossing the bridge here [Edinburgh], and when he understood there was a ferry to cross between him and Aberdeen he resolved to go back to England!" It was with the utmost difficulty that Mr. Haldane "persuaded him not to do so." Poor Mr. Moseley missed his journey north on the day he had arranged, for which, to do him justice, he is exceedingly sorry. Writing from "Edingburgh" on Wednesday, 1st April, he explains his detention

thus :—"I was here in time, but, through a mistake of Mr. Haldane's servant, my place in the mail was not secured, and when I went to the Tron, found, to my great surprise, that another had got the [seat] I was to have." Clearly, Mr. Moseley was not the man for pioneering work such as would be expected of him at so advanced a post as Aberdeen.

In May, Mr. William Stephens, of Bingley, a small town in Yorkshire, began a supply of seven weeks' duration. He preached with much acceptance, and left a favourable impression.

After Mr. Stephens' departure, the church was greatly favoured with a visit from Rowland Hill and Greville Ewing, who were itinerating together. They had come by way of "Aberbrothwick," Montrose, Brechin, Laurencekirk, and Stonehaven. From the last-named "the best of roads," says Mr. Ewing, "and the worst of countries was before us; the country, however, a little improved upon us before we came to Aberdeen." They arrived on Saturday evening (29th June, 1799), in time to allow of Mr. Ewing preaching, which he did from Eph. v., 1 and 2, "Be ye, therefore, followers of God," &c. "Next day," says Mr. Hill, "I preached to a crowded and affectionately attentive congregation. . . . in what is called the Independent Meeting [George Street Chapel] on the morning and afternoon; in the evening to three or four thousand people out of doors, but I had scarce finished half my discourse before we were interrupted by the rain. The sermon was much shortened by this circumstance, though the people stood with great patience under a brisk shower, till they were dismissed. Though I fear a real thirst

for vital religion is but little known in Aberdeen, yet I trust there is a sacred leaven among them."

This is probably the occasion on which he preached from Philippians iv., ver. 13. In giving out the text, that humour, so peculiarly and attractively his own, found expression. After repeating the first clause of his text, "I, Paul, can do *all* things," he stopt and commented, "Aye, Paul, you are a clever fellow. You have no little conceit of yourself. Very few can say 'I can do *all* things.' How do you manage it, I wonder?" Then, turning to his Bible, he read the remainder of the verse, "the grace of God strengthening me." "No thanks to you, Paul; *any* man can do *all* things with help like that." And so, into his sermon.

Mr. Ewing preached twice on the same day, probably an open-air service somewhere, and in the evening he occupied the pulpit of George Street Chapel.

The distinguished itinerants regretfully parted company here, with much mutual respect. Mr. Hill speaks of Mr. Ewing as "my worthy and affectionate fellow-labourer," while Mr. Ewing speaks of his "eccentric fellow-traveller" as indeed "a holy man of God."

Mr. Ewing renewed his interest in the cause at Aberdeen by two subsequent visits, once in the summer of 1815, and also in 1819, when he dispensed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

The pulpit was occupied by different preachers during the latter half of 1799. Among others Mr. Garie, of Perth, supplied five weeks. Two Rotherham students also preached—Mr. Thomas Burton and Mr. Robert Weaver—the latter for nine weeks.

Mr. Cowie, of Huntly, who was just then fighting his own battle in the north, was invited to supply, but, under date 31st August, declines in these terms, to Mr. Moir :—" Though I sincerely love you and your friends, yet you certainly might know, my dear sir, that I am in too ticklish a situation at present to attempt preaching on a Sabbath in your church." Mr. Cowie made no scruple, however, about preaching to the children of the Sabbath School Society on a week-day evening in November of that same year (1799). The collection amounted to nearly £20.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REV. WILLIAM STEPHENS, 1800-1803.

UP to a certain point there was probably an advantage in having a succession of preachers as has been related. It was educative, and it enabled the young church to see what kind of materials they had to draw on for a permanent supply. It also possessed the advantage of maintaining a degree of interest in the cause in the minds of the community. But the time came when the benefits of a settled pastorate were recognized.

In reviewing the successive preachers who had ministered, no one stood higher in the esteem of the church than Mr. William Stephens. If there were any misgivings as to his suitability, they arose from the repeated opinions of Mr. Edward Parsons of Leeds, who had the double advantage of a personal knowledge of Mr. Stephens and of George Street Church. Probably in reply to an enquiry, he says of Mr. Stephens:—"In natural ability he is not unfit for any situation, but he has had but little opportunity of

REV. WILLIAM STEPHENS.

From a Photograph of a Painting by himself.

cultivating such ability by study, which must be of considerable importance for Aberdeen. I would do all I can to prevent his accepting your invitation should you give him one, and I will not give my reason till another day. I think of Mr. Stephens, as you do, and I should rejoice to see him settled with you, but at present I think it cannot be." (!)

On the other hand, the preference of the church for Mr. Stephens was warmly supported by the Haldanes, who wrote of him in commendatory terms. Mr. Stephens was a man of commanding presence, and had a fine delivery. During his seven weeks' probation he had proved an attractive preacher, and both in town and country won the hearts of his hearers. He was 34 years of age, having been born in London 25th October, 1765. His antecedents were interesting, and his talents somewhat versatile. He was a skilful artist, and pursued the branch of scene painting for the theatre. He had also been an actor, a circumstance that would naturally account for his elocutionary abilities. It was through the instrumentality of an itinerant preacher that Mr. Stephens was converted, and, abandoning his stage connections, he entered on a course of study for the ministry.

With due appreciation of the special importance attaching to the appointment of a first pastor to a new cause, a call was forwarded to Mr. Stephens. It is a masterly document of three foolscap folios, and a digest of it is all that need be given. It acknowledges God's goodness to the church during its brief existence. It speaks of difficulties, but they were not to "murmur at the windings in the way." They were confirmed in

the view that he was a proper person for the church, the congregation, and the neighbourhood, by the favourable reports obtained of his ministrations at Old Deer, Inverallochy, Fintray, &c. Should he decline the call, it would be "one of the heaviest trials they had yet met with." The call at once suggests and combats objections that Mr. Stephens might be likely to urge against it. The matter is then clinched by the following categoric questions:—

"Do you know any place that so much needs your assistance?

"Do you know any place that bids so fair for success?

"Do you know any place where your labours have done more good?

"Do you know any place where the people are more unanimous and affectionate?

"Do you know any place where itinerating in summer is more needed?

"And can we suppose that you prefer your own ease on a small well-cultivated garden to the glorious prospect of laborious diligence in a large barren field?"

In a separate letter the church offered him as salary "£100 Sterling and perhaps £120, and if our circumstances would admit, to make it even more still."

After the lapse of a month, Mr. Stephens accepted the invitation. His letter, dated 18th January, 1800, is a rare specimen of caligraphy, as became a man of artistic skill. In language as graceful, he admits the powerful arguments in the call, and its unanimity is pleasing — indeed, without that he would not have accepted.

Mr. Stephens, having been ordained to the ministry at Bingley, was *inducted* to his new charge on Thursday, 23rd May, 1800, by Mr. James Haldane, who had, the previous year, been ordained to the ministry himself. After the sermon, Mr. Haldane recounted the steps that had been taken to fill the vacant pulpit, and publicly asked both the parties if they still adhered to their choice. He then addressed the pastor and the Church suitably, and voiced the sentiments of the Church in doctrine and discipline, whereupon "some enemies present were softened, at least for a time."

Mr. Stephens entered on the public work of his ministry here on Sabbath, 25th May. His first sermon describes wherein the prosperity of a church consists, founded on the words, "Send now prosperity," Ps. cxviii., v. 25. The grateful chronicler adds, "It would be superfluous to enlarge on the pleasure experienced."

The results of Mr. Stephens' ministry justified the expectancy regarding it. More than two hundred members were received within three years, and the attendance had increased to such an extent that it was seriously proposed to enlarge the chapel to over 1577 sittings. Mr. Haldane's continued interest in Mr. Stephens is brought out at this juncture in his proposal to defray the whole cost of the enlargement, one-third of it by an absolute gift, and two-thirds to be on loan without interest, "during Mr. Stephens' incumbency, provided £30 a year be paid to him in addition to his present salary." The scheme fell through, for reasons that we can only conjecture. It may have been owing to Mr. Moir's death. It is also possible that his sagacity saw in Mr. Stephens' popu-

larity, and the perhaps too rapid growth of the membership, some elements of weakness.

"Offences must needs come," and the ominous rubric for 1st July, 1800, runs—"Three sisters and one brother guilty of offences." The very veniality of the said offences, according to modern views, but accentuates the high standard of Christian conduct, and loyalty to the cause, aimed at. The necessity for instruction in the duties attaching to church life, and for consistency, seems to have been strongly felt by the pastor himself. He is the reputed author of a tract, entitled—*The Friendly Guide to Members of Gospel Churches, their duties to each other as recommended in Scripture.* Among the archives of the church I have found a copy of *The Friendly Guide.* It is a broadside, measuring 20 inches by 15, printed in three columns, and comprises twelve rules for Christian conduct. A colophon indicates that it was "Printed by J. Straphan at the Pottery Printing Office, Hanley." This, and the antique appearance of the print, lead me to believe that *The Guide* had probably been in use among the English Congregational Churches, and that Mr. Stephens had simply reprinted the document in tract form, as likely to be useful among the members of his own church. He did not confine himself to his own charge, although its rapid growth must have taxed him. He is known to have made several preaching tours in the Buchan district.

The most notable event in the history of the young church occurred when, as the brief but affectionate minute states, "Our dear Brother George Moir was removed from us this day by Death." This record is

followed by a clean page and a-half, evidently intended for an obituary notice—a task that none of his contemporaries felt equal to? The circumstance is typical of the man, whose influence was felt, but not asserted. The event was a stunning blow to the church, whose existence was due to his initiative, and whose progress was largely the result of his faith, tact, and wisdom. His was the sanctified zeal and sagacious counsel that guided its early and difficult years. He had seen its original nine members number two hundred, and if his high ideal of a Christian society had not been, perhaps, always maintained, still he had done a notable work, and "builded better than he knew."

The church very soon realized the loss sustained. There was trouble in the air. The librating mind which had guided them through other crises was no more. The pen which had so faithfully recorded their brief history was laid aside, and the carefully kept Minute Book, with its quaint rubrics, had become a sluggard's garden. Early in 1803 Mr. Stephens paid a visit to Edinburgh. A rumour gained currency that he meditated leaving Aberdeen. This was obviously a painful prospect for the church; and, in their excitement, an imprudent letter was sent intended to dissuade their pastor from such a purpose. It warned him against coming under the influence of "our Edinburgh friends," but it entirely failed of its object.

Mr. Stephens' careful but spirited reply reminds the writer and signatories of the letter that they had "lost him who was well worthy of the charge; and who, with a knowledge of human nature, would not, had he been living, written such a letter, and—excuse me if I

say it—he would not have signed such an one." This is evidently the beginning of the end, for Mr. Stephens frankly admits that he heartily approves of the sentiments of "our Edinburgh friends." Shortly after this Mr. Stephens resigned his charge, and it will probably never be known what were the real grounds that led to his abandonment of a sphere in which he was so apparently successful.

Mr. Stephens went to Edinburgh, and in April, 1804, became colleague at the Tabernacle along with Mr. Haldane. About the same time the seminary established by the Haldanes for training young men for the ministry was transferred from Glasgow to Edinburgh, and, associated with Mr. Haldane and Mr. Aikman, Mr. Stephens became one of the tutors. In Edinburgh he is described as "a popular preacher, and a favourite with many." In 1806 he adopted Baptist sentiments, and resigned his positions, and left Edinburgh. From that year till 1817 there is a hiatus in his history. In the latter year he was invited to the pastorate of the Town Meadows Baptist Church, Rochdale. After a ministry there of twenty years he resigned in 1837. He published a sermon on *Faith in Christ and a new birth connected*, which he had preached 14th January, 1821. During his pastorate in Rochdale a new chapel was built in West Street at a cost of £3333, towards which Mr. Stephens generously resigned an endowment of nearly £70 a year. His last public appearance was at a United Missionary Prayer Meeting, held at an Independent Chapel at Rochdale. Mr. Stephens is said to have "maintained an honourable and useful course as minister of his people. He was a

man of noble personal appearance, and his life was one of great spiritual beauty and grace. He died as he had lived, rejoicing in the life of the gospel." At his death in 1839 he was interred in the "Chapel Yard," and the following epitaph is recorded on his grave :—

Beneath this Stone
lieth interred the body of
WILLIAM STEPHENS,
who departed this life the 16th day
of September, 1839, aged 73 years.
Forty-three years a Minister of the Gospel.
(Romans vi. 23. Ephesians ii. 8.) [Quoted.]

Three of his children are interred in the same grave. His widow survived him 37 years.

Mr. Stephens' portrait in these pages is taken from an oil painting in the vestry of his church, and was executed by himself. There is an unconfirmed tradition that Mr. Stephens' sympathies were with the Chartist movements of his day.*

During Mr. Stephens' ministry there was one election of deacons,† in 1801 :—

PATRICK MORISON.
WILLIAM MATTHEWS.
WILLIAM STEPHEN.
WILLIAM THOMSON.

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* I am obliged for many of these interesting particulars to the Rev. D. O. Davies, Baptist Minister, Rochdale. The *Missionary Magazine* for 1802 contains Mr. Stephens' "very striking history."

† I may here mention that election to the diaconate was originally for life. In 1890 the tenure of office was changed to a three years' term, the retiring deacons being eligible for re-election. Whatever may be the advantages of the limitation, signs are not wanting of a desire to return to the original vogue.

Two of this group, Patrick Morison and William Stephen, I have already identified as among the "original nine."

After the death of George Moir, there can be no doubt that WILLIAM MATTHEWS became his natural successor in influence and in service in the church. As a business man his social position was considerable in a small community, among whom there were "not many noble." Mr. Matthews filled in succession the offices of Secretary and Treasurer, both of the Church funds and Poor's funds. In nothing, perhaps, was he more conspicuously helpful than in this tender care for the poor. As an active member of the Sick Man's Friend Society, he did many a kind turn, but it was especially for those of "the household of faith" that he pled most earnestly, and gave most freely, for a quarter of a century. He died in 1851, at nearly 80 years of age.

WILLIAM THOMSON was admitted a member 24th April, 1801, and is said to have been a clerk or hosier, and when Alexander Innes became combative, and refused to give up the church books, he was deputed to confer with him with a view to their restoration. In this he did not succeed, and in fact went over to the enemy, for it is on record that the books were obtained only after "a long and unpleasant struggle" with both. He became an adherent of the Spence party, and went to Blackfriars Street Church.

REV. JOHN PHILIP, D.D.

From an Engraving in the "Evangelical Magazine."

CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REV. JOHN PHILIP, D.D., 1804-1819.

IN the summer of 1803 the church was again arranging for pulpit supply, and, as before, drawing on likely English students. The difficulties in the way of transit then, can hardly be appreciated by us who make the journey to or from London in one round of the clock. A Mr. Davidson of Hoxton Academy had engaged to be in Aberdeen by a certain Sabbath. As two other friends were coming to Dundee about the same time, he chose to accompany them by packet there, thinking perhaps to shorten the journey. He sailed from London on the 24th of June. On the 29th he writes from Lowestoft, that after being four days at sea they had not arrived at Yarmouth, the "wind being contrary." On the 5th July he announces his arrival at Dundee after a tedious journey of nine days, in which they were "much becalmed, and had almost every night to come to anchor." He was, of course, too late for his engagement, but the coach from Dundee brings him in time for the following Sabbath.

Another English minister writes apprehensively:— "I am sure, to go all the way in a week and to preach three times on Sunday would be too much for my constitution!"

Nearly a year elapsed before an appointment to the pastorate was made, during which the Church was vexed by circumstances of which there is now no specific knowledge. On Mr. Moir's death, Alexander Innes was elected secretary, but, as already noted, for some unknown reason, became so disaffected that he would neither write the minutes of proceedings nor give up the book, nor the "Church Chist," with the Feu Charter and other papers. In the meantime, early in 1804, Dr. (then Mr.) John Philip, after the usual supply services, was elected to the vacant charge. Mr. Philip was born at Kirkcaldy, 14th April, 1775. His father was a school teacher, and a member of the Established Church: the son is described as "fond of his books." As a youth of nineteen he had the courage to accept the challenge of a public discussion on the comparative claims of Christianity and Infidelity, at which his opponent admitted himself defeated (!). Mr. Philip, who had gone to business in the linen trade, in Dundee, was happily brought under the influence of the Rev. Thomas Durant, the pastor of the Congregational Church there. Mr. Durant, discovering superior qualities in young Philip, revealed them to him, with the result that he sought admission to Hoxton Academy, where he underwent the usual theological three years' course for the ministry. His first engagement was as an assistant at Newbury, in England. On a visit to Scotland, Dr. Philip was induced to preach in George Street Chapel, with the result stated.

He soon discovered the charge to be no bed of roses. What with the defection of Alexander Innes, who, with his own personal grievance, assumed a defiant attitude, and a party of malcontents who had presumably been opposed to Dr. Philip's settlement, on account of what they termed a tincture of Arminianism in minister and members, the pastor found himself in a serious dilemma. The dissentients exaggerated their own importance by declaring that three-fourths of the members were disaffected. In order to test the value of these assertions, Dr. Philip adopted a very drastic course. In May, 1806, he dissolved the church! The doctor, who is admitted by his friends to have been arbitrary and self-willed, has always been credited with the responsibility of this unique proceeding. It was really the result of an agreement with the church. The first minute entered after the recovery of the Minute Book makes this clear:—"It was seen to be necessary for our Minister to make known to the whole Church . . . that he would no longer act as their minister, nor with them as a church, until he knew who approved of one another, and also of his ministry." The membership amounted to 277, out of which 247 (81 men and 166 women) came forward and signed in favour of the new order, were then examined "in their knowledge and experience of the truth," and constituted the new membership, leaving a small minority of thirty who declined to return.

That the strain had been very severe is sufficiently attested by the fact that of the seven original members who were living at the period of this "long and unpleasant struggle," four of them withdrew from the

church, namely, Alexander Innes, William Stephen, Ebenezer Gibb, and Peter Black. The three original members who adhered to the church were Patrick Morison, William Paul, and Alexander Clinterty.

The following story is told of this period of strained relations between Dr. Philip and some members of the church:—A dissentient member was reporting either on an applicant for membership, or more probably on some recusant from fellowship, that "she esteemed it a disgrace to belong to such a church." The remark betrayed the real feelings of the reporter, and what followed thereon was his own expulsion from the church, there and then.

By this time the Haldanes had been instrumental in forming another cause in the town. One of the early minutes of the Frederick Street Church states that "after the church was dissolved in George Street by Mr. Philip in May, 1806, a few who could not see their duty again to join with her in fellowship went to hear the gospel in the North Street." [?] *

Mr. David Russell, who had formerly ministered in the North Street, was recalled from Montrose, and after some weeks the church was formed (8th February, 1807), consisting of 10 male and 7 female members. Mr. Russell accepted their invitation to the pastorate, to which he was ordained on 11th March, Mr. Gilchrist, Dundee, Mr. Penman and Mr. Forrester, Arbroath, officiating. Of the seventeen who formed the nucleus

* A Malt Barn stood probably on the site now occupied by the Free North Church. It had been used as a preaching station by the first body of Seceders who set up in Aberdeen in 1756, and is more than likely the building used by the Haldanes.

of Frederick Street Church, there were only two of the George Street dissentients, with their wives.

Dr. Philip's pastorate may be said to have only begun at what was called the "new-modelling" of the church. From that time till the close of his ministry the church enjoyed a period of uninterrupted peace and prosperity. There was just one conflict of opinion between pastor and people, and that was in regard to the Minute Book of the church. It had been an object of pride and interest to the members; they grieved over its temporary detention by Alexander Innes, and rejoiced over its restoration, but now, when it was recovered, Dr. Philip would not permit of its being used! This arose from "an idea entertained by our pastor that to keep Books was unscriptural, and was not at all proper, as it was a making the church too like a worldly society, and altho' this sentiment was highly disapproved of by us in office, and different attempts were made in private and public church meetings to get minutes kept, yet he always prevented us either directly or indirectly. The peace of the church only led some of us to bear with it (however far this was right we shall not say) in [the] hope it would cure itself, which it might have done, and would have done, long ago, but for this opinion of our pastor."

When the embargo on the Minute Book was eventually got rid of, at the removal of the pastor, the narrative of church events is resumed, but not before the pent-up feelings find expression in an indignant protest—a protest which for obvious reasons any historian of the church will share. Efforts had been made to keep up the continuity of events, but

unsuccessfully. "Different members kept *scratches* of our proceedings at our church meetings. Two of those what keept these a long time died, and their *scratches* were not got!" The hiatus subsisted from 1807 to 1818, a period of 11 years. And so the indignant recorder says—"We would blush and be ashamed when we look to the blank in this our Church Minute Book—regarding it as a great evil—and similar to which, while we are spared, we trust no such thing will ever happen again." The forbearance of the church at such a breach, as they believed, of decency and order, is worthy of admiration, but it may fairly be regarded as a tacit tribute to the worth and influence of their respected pastor. It meant, that much as they prized their precious Minute Book, they valued their minister more. At the same time, few will doubt that he pressed the pastoral prerogative too far, in a Congregational Church, and needlessly strained the loyalty of his flock, who to their credit never allowed this merely ecclesiastical question to interfere with the harmonious and real work of the church. Nothing but the convictions of a strong man could have justified his opposition to the cherished opinions of his people. In preventing any record of the proceedings of the church, the act had its nemesis in the pastor's own self-effacement. But, for this, Dr. Philip probably did not care, and happily there is no lack of information from other sources as to what manner of man he was, or of what sort of work he wrought.

He was a warm-hearted man, earnest and forceful; sometimes moved to strenuousness when the appellant cause had his sympathy, such as missionary efforts and

young men's interests. In the pulpit he was not only a presence, but a living power, and it is not too much to say that he was then the most attractive and impressive preacher in Aberdeen. The chapel was often crowded to its utmost capacity, and on one memorable occasion so much so that the sash of one of the windows in the rear had to be removed to give the preacher access to the pulpit.

His preaching was especially popular with thoughtful young people. He took hold of them. He made it a point to come into personal contact with them, inviting them to his house, singly and in groups, for conversation and counsel. Reading young men found in Dr. Philip a sympathetic friend and a wise director of their studies. Indeed, his house became a veritable seminary, and several who ultimately went into the mission field did not hesitate to say that they *studied* under Dr. Philip. The gatherings at the minister's were attended by young women as well as by young men. One remarkable and steady pupil was Margaret, the daughter of William Paul, one of the "original nine." It was customary for members of the class to propound questions, or to state difficulties arising in the course of Bible study. After hearing various opinions expressed by the members it was no uncommon thing for Dr. Philip to turn to Miss Paul, before solving the crux himself, and ask, "Well, Margaret, what have you to say to this?" And Margaret, out of a full and lucid mind, usually returned such an answer as clarified the difficulty. As Mrs. Bain, Margaret became the mother of a remarkable son, Dr. Alexander Bain, Emeritus Professor and ex-Rector of Aberdeen University.

These gatherings were very genial and promotive of lasting friendships among the pupils. Worthy David Macallan and my uncle, Francis Malcolm, were among those who enjoyed the classes under the fostering care of their beloved pastor. They followed them up by a rather singular plan, adopted for their mutual improvement. Selecting some topic, usually of religious interest, each wrote an essay on it, which they exchanged after the minister's class was over. It may have been a suggestion of their pastor. In any case it was of immense value to both in their future careers.*

In the first decades of the century an extraordinary interest was manifested in foreign missions. Into the movement Dr. Philip threw himself with his accustomed energy. He incited and prepared young men for that field of Christian enterprise, and the London Missionary Society found in him one of their most ardent and capable auxiliaries. Under his care George Street Church became a nursing mother of many eminent pioneers in the missionary field. The London Missionary Society came to regard this district as one in which the flame of missionary zeal burnt bright. Dr.

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* Both Macallan and Malcolm adopted Baptist views—the latter in a rather singular way. A member of our church had joined the Baptist brethren, and his wife invited Mr. Malcolm to lead back her erring husband to the fold. The result of the experiment was a surprise to all. Instead of convincing the Baptist of his error, Mr. Malcolm became convinced of his own! This incident occurred after Dr. Philip went to South Africa. On one of his visits home (1826) he came to Aberdeen, but Mr. Malcolm, a retiring man, was rather shy of meeting his late pastor. They did meet, however, when the Doctor merrily rallied his old friend with, "Well, Francis, where *have* you been? Under the water all this time?"

Philip heartily promoted all their views. He anticipated the visits of their agents and representatives by carefully arranging for successful meetings, and by cordially promoting the good cause in every desirable way. And when, in the course of time, it became expedient to send some one to superintend their extensive operations in South Africa, the Society had no difficulty about offering the responsible post to Dr. Philip, as the most capable man for it.

What is termed a "long and painful correspondence" ensued, the London Missionary Society on the one hand urging its claim to Dr. Philip's services, and George Street Church at first unanimously, with no simulated sentiment, rejecting it, but finally yielding, and yielding gracefully to the exigencies of the case. Three of the letters closing this correspondence are given in the Minute Book, and reproduced by Mr. King in his *Brief Historical Sketch.* The last of the series is a letter from the church, introducing and cordially recommending their late pastor to the interest and sympathies of the missionaries of South Africa. Without making too much of the sacrifice of parting with him, the letter exhibits a generous acquiescence in the choice of the London Missionary Society, knowing it to be Dr. Philip's own strong desire to enter joyfully that field of labour he had so often and so consistently recommended to others.

Commenting on this correspondence, Dr. Wardlaw says that it contains "a fine manifestation of the strength of the missionary spirit in both pastor and flock, of their mutual attachment, of the happiness and spiritual prosperity of the one under the ministry of

the other, and of the thoroughly cordial amity in which, with reciprocal reluctance, they bowed to the will of Providence, and parted." Shortly after Dr. Philip entered on the discharge of his responsible duties at the Cape (in 1820), the University of Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A., conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Dr. Philip's career in South Africa, of which he has been called the "Liberator," is matter of public knowledge and of public history. Suffice it to say that, as a great missionary, and as an administrator of mission affairs, he fulfilled the highest hopes of those who had called him to occupy the field. That he took, as a man of affairs, a comprehensive view of his sphere of influence is best seen in his important book entitled *African Researches*. There, in discussing the condition of the native races, Dr. Philip proves himself the missionary-statesman. In speaking of the political injustice they suffered, and especially the brutal treatment by Dutch settlers, he knew not to moderate his zeal. In this way he suffered not only criticism at the hands of the authorities, but also the penalties of an action at law, in which he was mulcted some £1200, which was paid by his friends. Notwithstanding this, his knowledge and well-known views on the whole question constituted him an authority. He is said to have been "the most prominent politician at the Cape for thirty years." He paid two visits home, during one of which he gave influential evidence before a Parliamentary Committee. This led, in due time, to a decided amelioration of the unhappy condition of the aborigines. His wider views and plans on their behalf

were never realized, which, to this large-hearted, if self-willed spirit, was very disappointing.

After thirty-one years of strenuous service in the mission field, he died at Hankey, South Africa, on the 27th August, 1851. Dr. Wardlaw preached his funeral sermon in London, at the request of the London Missionary Society. In it he embodied an excellent estimate of his character, with a narrative of his career, furnished for the occasion by the Rev. David Arthur. The Rev. Thomas Durant Philip, one of Dr. Philip's sons, still labours in South Africa, mainly as a preceptor of missionaries, one of the interests to which his father was devoted.*

From 1801 to 1818 there is no record of elections of deacons. That there were such appointments there is no doubt, and incidentally we know of at least two members who were elected to that office during Dr. Philip's incumbency, namely, GEORGE MOIR (II.) and PETER TAYLOR. The former (who is not to be confused with the founder) is referred to as a deacon by Mr. George King, whose father-in-law he was. Mr. Moir was originally a member of the Established Church, and an elder of St. Machar's, but joined George Street Church about 1805, and shortly thereafter was elected a deacon. He was an engineer to his business, and "a man of great intelligence and deep piety." He took an active interest in the church's prosperity, engaged in Sabbath School teaching and

* The portrait of Dr. Philip in this volume is reproduced from the engraving in *The Evangelical Magazine*, and seems to be characteristic of him in his prime. There is another, a lithograph—a copy of which is in the minister's vestry of the church, taken apparently at a later date.

other efforts in the city and in the country round, and was a means of stimulating the early progress of the church at Blackhills. Mr. Moir died of consumption in 1814, in his forty-second year.

Peter Taylor's name, with the added word "Deacon," occurs in the minutes. He was evidently an early member of the church, and rejoined at the new modelling. When Mr. Thomson became pastor, Mr. Taylor joined the party who adhered to Mr. Spence, and in that connection took a prominent part, and was ultimately one of the signatories of the submission when peace was restored.

REV. ALEXANDER THOMSON.

From the Mezzotint of Painting by Cassie.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REV. ALEXANDER THOMSON, 1820-1853.

CONSIDERABLE difficulty was experienced by the church in obtaining a successor to Dr. Philip. At the end of ten months, and after hearing various candidates, the church, on the 12th of July, 1819, by a large majority, chose Mr. Orme of Perth. A call was forwarded to him, subscribed by the three deacons and 178 members, but he could not be prevailed on to accept it. The process was repeated during the following six months, when Mr. Alexander Thomson of Lochee was elected by a considerable majority over the Rev. James Spence, M.A.* A call was accordingly given to Mr. Thomson, and accepted by him on 17th February, 1820. Such, however, was the reluctance of the people at Lochee to part with him that he was on the point of retracting his acceptance

*Mr. Spence, who belonged to Huntly, was originally, says Mr. King, a student and licentiate of the Established Church, but a year or two before had joined the Independents. He was a man of keen intellect and a good logician, although not an attractive preacher.

of the call. For his own comfort it would have been well if he had, for his election was unhappily far from harmonious. Mr. Spence had a pretty large minority, who warmly adhered to him, and finally withdrew from the church. This they did in an irregular manner, without applying in the usual way for letters of demission. The recusants, joined by some members from Frederick Street Church, built the chapel in Blackfriars Street, and called Mr. Spence to the pastorate. A very considerable amount of feeling was generated on both sides on account of this unfortunate revolt. Many pages of George Street Church Minute Book are filled with the controversial correspondence that ensued. Conferences were held to bring about an eirenicon between the two churches. Neither George Street nor the churches composing the Northern Association saw their way to fraternize with Blackfriars Street Church till they acknowledged that, in separating as they did, both from George Street and Frederick Street, they had committed a breach of brotherly love. This admission produced a reconciliation, but a certain aloofness was not dispelled until the genial ministry of Dr. John Kennedy, when more friendly relations were resumed.

Mr. Alexander Thomson, the pastor elect, was born at Edinburgh on the 3rd of May, 1781. His parents belonged to the Establishment, and, at the early age of 16, Mr. Thomson joined the Tolbooth Church. The minister, Dr. Davidson, had forecast in the young communicant a likely accession to the pulpit of the Church of Scotland. But, when still a lad of 17, Mr. Thomson was caught in the remarkable move-

ment initiated by the Haldanes, and, feeling a call to the ministry, entered on his theological studies under Greville Ewing and Mr. Innes at Glasgow.

After his studies were completed, Mr. Thomson was sent to preach at Fortforge in Northumberland. So acceptable were his services there, that the people desired him to settle amongst them. It was, however, one of the Haldanes' rules that their students should have at least one year's preaching experience before accepting a settled charge. Mr. Thomson was then transferred to a preaching station at Lochee, near Dundee, a village in which Mr. Haldane had a peculiar interest from his own early residence in that neighbourhood. His ministry there at once excited so much attention, and was felt to be so beneficial, that he complied with the wishes of the people to remain with them. A church was then formed, and Mr. Thomson was ordained to the charge in 1803, when still a young man of 22.

The induction services at his settlement in Aberdeen took place on the 5th April, 1820, and were conducted by Mr. Begg of Fraserburgh, Mr. Robertson of Crichie, Dr. Russell of Dundee (who gave him "the charge"), Mr. Morrison of Duncanston, Mr. Gibb of Banff, Mr. Penman of Aberdeen, and Mr. Smith of Blackhills.

The early years of Mr. Thomson's ministry were rather disheartening. Besides the defection of the Blackfriars Street friends, other circumstances withdrew members from the church. One of these was the Baptist question. The Baptist friends in the town had become so numerous that they resolved to unite in forming a separate cause. With that view they

built a large chapel in Union Terrace, afterwards taken over by the Bon-Accord Free Church. Most of the churches in town lost members in this way, but probably none so many as George Street Church. In like manner the tide of westward emigration, which set in in the 20's, deprived the church of several attached and valuable members.

The same good qualities, however, that had endeared Mr. Thomson to his former flock aided him greatly in filling up, in his new sphere, the ranks that had been thus sorely depleted, and in gaining him an extraordinary hold on the affections of his people. His benign countenance was itself a means of grace; his whole attitude of transparency and simple-mindedness won him the confidence of all. His was the first face in a pulpit to impress itself on my own consciousness. I understood nothing, but I *knew* that the man I saw there, preaching with black silk gloves on outstretched hands, was in earnest about something, sometimes even tearfully so, and that he was good and guileless.* His favourite appeal was to "people of rightly constituted minds." In the management of affairs, Mr. Thomson could adopt a tone of firmness and resolution that bespoke convictions from which he could not be lightly driven. How characteristic is the following of a man who knew not the value of a euphemism—"Brother Prolicks, you will please pray, but *be brief!*"

He was an excellent visitor among his people, and was always welcome. He made a point, as often as

* One who was an occasional hearer tells me that she liked to hear him preach, "for he aye preached us a' into Heaven." It may truly be said of Mr. Thomson that he was popular without aiming at popularity.

possible, to be present at the choir practisings, which he enjoyed. The usual *finale* to these meetings was, "Well, Mr. Thomson, what would you like for a closing hymn?" His almost invariable reply was, "Crown Him, Crown Him;" his favourite hymn. An incident is related, illustrative of his sensitive concern for the comfort of his people. In 1829 the method of lighting the chapel was changed from candles and lamps to gas. Mr. Thomson, on the first occasion of using the new illuminant, was afraid, not that the jets would

"Start into light
And make the lighter start!"

but that the people might become needlessly alarmed at the sudden and unaccustomed blaze when the tap was turned. So he thought it right, before that operation, to calm their fears, and to advise them not to be in the least alarmed. As it happened, Sandy Paul, the beadle, in place of screwing *on* the gas, in his nervousness screwed it *off*. Instead of alarming light there was more alarming darkness.

As may be readily inferred from Mr. Thomson's pacific disposition, he was held in the highest esteem by his clerical brethren. It is related, however, that he once had a serious rencontre with the Rev. Mr. Brown, then incumbent of St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel. Mr. Brown was an extremely affable man, full of *bon homie* and good humour, fond of fishing, and who made no scruple of being seen, angle in hand, and with lines, hooks and flies coiled round his hat. The two met on Union Bridge one day, when Mr. Brown, with an assumed seriousness, accosted Mr. Thomson with the grave charge, "You 're a thief, Mr. Thomson, you 're a

thief." "Oh! Mr. Brown," remonstrated the scandalized Mr. Thomson, "Oh! Mr. Brown." "So you are, sir, so you are, for you 've stolen some of my sheep." It need hardly be added that the two shepherds parted with a hearty hand-shaking.

Dr. Kennedy, writing me as to the cordial terms which subsisted between him and Mr. Thomson, adds, "Mr. Thomson, while a most useful preacher and pastor, had no aptitude for what we call public life, and never appeared on the platform of public societies." The only time, so far as I know, that Mr. Thomson ever went to press was when he published a sermon delivered in the church on the 2nd June, 1822. The occasion was a sad one, being nothing less than the execution of William Gordon and Robert McIntosh for the crime of murder. The preface explains Mr. Thomson's more immediate interest in the circumstances to arise from the fact that William Gordon was for some time a member of George Street Church, and that it was Mr. Thomson's painful duty to attend the poor man in his last moments. The event was improved from the text, II. Chron. xxxiii., 10-13.

He did not possess the disciplined, resourceful mind of his predecessor, so helpful in the training of young men, yet he was almost equally successful in the numbers who came forward during his ministry, desirous of entering on pastoral work at home or in the mission field. Their names are given under another heading.

As an item of church history, I may refer here to Mr. Patrick Thomson. He was Mr. Thomson's only son, and possessed in a marked degree his father's amiable characteristics, and shared in the esteem he enjoyed.

The following excerpts from the Minute Book are honourable tokens of the affectionate regard in which he was held :—

29th May, 1826.—"Peter Thomson, our pastor's son, invited by the church to exercise his talents in exhortation, preaching, &c., as God in His providence may call him to."

28th August, 1828.—"The church unanimously agreed to give Mr. Patrick Thomson ten guineas to help to pay his expenses, he being here on a visit, as a token of respect and gratitude for his labours." Gratitude has here a "sense of favours to come," for the two deacons who were deputed to present the gift were commissioned to say that "they expected to see him again at next vacation, and to enjoy his labours."

In the following April a letter was written to the authorities of Highbury College, where Mr. Thomson was studying, requesting them to allow him to come to Aberdeen for his holidays, "to labour among them, and to assist his father." This request was cordially granted, and the duties fulfilled, followed again by a honorarium.

A proposal was then made in August, 1829, to "call" Mr. Patrick, to assist for a limited time, that his father might have more leisure to visit the families of the church, as desired by many. He declined, on the ground that his college course was not completed. In the following year he accepted a call to Liverpool. I may add that, till the close of his life, Mr. Patrick Thomson's occasional visits to Aberdeen were veritable times of refreshing. He was a saintly man, refined in manner, and melodious of voice. His ministrations

were prized for his own as well as for his revered father's sake. His sermons, whatever other effect they produced, had the happy one of burning into his hearers' memories the texts on which they were based. I think the last time he preached in our church was from the words, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appeareth we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." A profound impression was produced. Mr. Thomson died in 1871. His son, the Rev. Radford Thomson, is one of the Professors at New College, London, who prefaces a volume of his father's sermons with a memoir.

During Mr. Thomson's sole pastorate there were six elections of Deacons, whose names are as follows :—

1820.—JOHN WILLIAMSON.
" JAMES THOM.
" WILLIAM DUNCAN.
" WILLIAM INNES.
1826.—JOHN LESLIE.
" WILLIAM THOMSON, Jun.
" WILLIAM MATTHEWS, Jun.
1828.—GEORGE GORDON.
" JOHN GRANT.
1828.—GEORGE KING.
1832.—DAVID DAVIDSON.
" WILLIAM LESLIE.
" JAMES WOOD.
1837.—JAMES MIDDLETON.
" HUGH ROSS.
1841.—JAMES MURRAY.
" WILLIAM ROBINSON.

Of JOHN WILLIAMSON and JAMES THOM, Mr. King records that both took a special interest in the church at Blackhills, in conjunction with George Moir (II.). The former was a butcher to trade, and, if I mistake not, lost his life in crossing a flooded river in the north. The latter was a native of Peterhead, a mill-wright in Messrs. Hadden's employment. His step-daughters, Misses Jane and Helen Davidson, are members of the church.

Of WILLIAM DUNCAN and WILLIAM INNES the church records yield but few items of biographic interest. The former had the honour of being the only member present at the first meeting of the Sabbath School. The latter left the church on becoming a Baptist.

JOHN LESLIE is the oldest deacon of the church whom it was my privilege to know personally. Mr. Leslie was born in Huntly, in 1796, his worthy father being the originator of Sabbath Schools in that district. Mr. Leslie, until sixteen years of age, enjoyed the advantage of a superior education. On his father's death, at that stage, he removed to Aberdeen, and entered practically on the manufacturing business, in the successful prosecution of which he passed the greater part of his life. In 1822 he joined our church, and within a year was appointed secretary, a post he held for the long period of 33 years, performing the duties of it with singular efficiency and conscientiousness. In point of scholarly accuracy his church minutes remain as a model to all-comers. Twice was Mr. Leslie entrusted with the charge of the church funds. He was for three years superintendent of the Sabbath School. Indeed, there was not an office or duty connected with the church that he did not fill with conspicuous ability. Whilst the interests of the church were paramount, he was not oblivious of other claims on his support and sympathy. Especially dear to Mr. Leslie and his family were the interests of the London Missionary Society, an enterprise they supported in many ways. Mr. Leslie served on the Town Council three terms, and was raised to the Magistrates' Bench. As Master

of Mortifications, he performed a notable public service, by editing a careful resumé of all the funds under his charge. In all these relations the prevailing note of Mr. Leslie's conduct was that of unbending rectitude. There never was a false ring in Mr. Leslie's free voice. Some years before his death, in 1877, he retired to the quietude of private life. Many of these details I have gleaned from a touching tribute paid to Mr. Leslie's memory in the *Scottish Congregational Magazine* for August, 1877, by Mr. Arthur, who comments on his inoffensive life, consistent character, brotherly affection, with a pensive regret which all who knew Mr. Leslie will willingly endorse. Such men are the strength of a church. For prolonged, unremitting, unobtrusive labours for the church, whose very dust was dear to him, no man's memory has more need to be held in grateful honour. Credit is also due to him for his fair-minded appreciation of other churches, for whose members he cherished a brotherly affection.

WILLIAM THOMSON, Jun., was born at Fraserburgh, I think, in 1794. He was an ironmonger, in Union Street. He was of an intellectual turn, and possessed distinctly literary tastes. He took an active interest in the church, and in the affairs of the denomination. He was secretary to the Association of Congregational Churches in Aberdeen and Banffshire. He also kept a stock of Sabbath School publications, at a time when the general booksellers did not cultivate that class of business. I can well remember my father's high regard for Mr. Thomson as a superior man. Mr. Thomson had a large family, no fewer than six of whom died before himself. He died on 30th July, 1840.

WILLIAM MATTHEWS, Jun., was the son of William Matthews, noticed on page 52, and in early life was a most active and useful member.

GEORGE GORDON was a striking personality. He always appeared to me to have carried into the 19th many of the primitive characteristics of the 18th century. In his very dress he was homespun and unconventional. No less so was he in manners and conversation. Original in thought, trenchant in expression, George was a much-pondering, rather solitary, but far from ungenial man. He was always himself. Though not unamenable to influences and arguments, George took them to avizandum. Hence he

> "Resolved not quick,
> But when resolved was strong."

George was a plasterer, I think, and "careless" in early life. The first influence that induced him to take things seriously was his affection for the very excellent woman whom he afterwards married. He resolved that he should not marry until, with at least one hundred guineas in hand, he could furnish a comfortable home for his bride. For a working man a hundred years ago, his resolution implied much industry and self-denial, a self-denial which characterized him through life. The next great influence to which he became subjected was probably the powerful preaching of Dr. Philip, which gave him a vital interest in religious matters. He became a deacon in 1828, and shortly after adopted Baptist views and left the church for a time. He returned, however, before long, as a private member, bringing (not obtruding) his

principles with him. None who ever heard George's prayers can possibly forget them. They were powerful, fervid, abrupt, almost to the point of irreverence. We knew better than that they were irreverent, and felt that they were stamped with his own strong individuality; were instinct with a true spirituality, and with ideas freshly, if often quaintly, put. His attempts to address the children in the Sunday School were not successful. His peculiar appearance and style of expression were apt to excite their risible faculties. Under an unkempt exterior, George possessed a warm heart. He loved his church, and at his death, in 1859, bequeathed part of his means for the following objects:—the Church Library Fund, the Sabbath School Library Fund, the Hymn Book Fund.

JOHN GRANT was by trade a plain, hard-working mason, and somewhat of a disciplinarian. It was his great ambition to give his sons a superior education, and in this he succeeded. Several have entered the professions, one being a clergyman in the Episcopal Church. John was a determined opponent of the "New Views" at the time of that controversy. He did a good deal of quiet work about the church. He went to Kincardine O'Neil in 1858, and died there in 1875.

In GEORGE KING the church possessed a man warmly devoted to her interests. He was born in the parish of Slains, in 1797, and in early life pursued some humble calling. Endowed with a shrewd, enquiring cast of mind, Mr. King became a great reader, and took to dealing in books, becoming, in the language of that day, a "book-vendor," and travelled round a large

country district with his literary wares. He ultimately settled down in Aberdeen, and built up an important business of bookselling, publishing, and printing. Assuming as a partner his talented brother, Robert, the firm of G. & R. King became a leading one in the north of Scotland.* Mr. King found scope for his intelligent energies in many church duties and functions. He took part in Sabbath School work in early life, and was for many years the laborious treasurer for the Poor's Fund of the church. He also took an active share in liquidating the debt on the original church, and in raising funds for the new one. Besides contributing freely to the building fund, the wheel window and the clock were the result of his giving and asking. The bazaar got up to extinguish the debt was largely indebted to Mr. King's exertions for its success.

No man in the church has done more to spread an intelligent knowledge of its history and principles than Mr. King, and I readily acknowledge my indebtedness for much information to his brief *Historical Sketch* [1870], which he wrote after his retirement from business, and generously presented to the members. The church library was enriched at Mr. King's death by many books selected from his own large collection.

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* Mr. Robert King, who was a member of the church, was a man of great intellectual ability, and possessed considerable literary skill. The principal product of his pen is his book, *The Covenanters of the North.* He did not live to see it published, his friend, Dr. Kennedy, having to see it through the press. His son, Sir George King, M.B., LL.D., F.R.S., K.C.I.E., &c., also in early life a member of the church, has exhibited in his own brilliant career the mental qualities of his father.

He also bequeathed his unique Pamphlet Library to the church, the collection of a lifetime.*

Besides these bequests, Mr. King left £500 to the deacons of the church, the interest on which was to form the nucleus of a fund for the support of a City Missionary, along with nineteen guineas for the purchase of tracts and periodicals for the mission.

DAVID DAVIDSON I knew well, but not before he left the church and joined the Baptist body. He was long in business as a cabinetmaker. In church affairs the most prominent part he took was in the Sabbath School, of which he was the first superintendent, from 1827 to 1836. Mr. Davidson was a self-contained man, of a deeply religious nature, a great theologian, and a strong Calvinist. He was a man of few words, but was often in evidence with kindly considerate acts. He died in 1859.

WILLIAM LESLIE (1802-1879). Mr. Leslie was a native of New Deer, and joined the church on a certificate from the church at Crichie, in 1828. From the first, Mr. Leslie took a lively interest in church affairs, and an active share of its work, including Sabbath School teaching at the Printfield and at the Bridge of Don. It is remarkable that, although Mr. Leslie was all his life immersed in important commercial enterprises, much engaged in public affairs and civic concerns, his interest in church matters never abated,

* In the Appendix C, I reprint an article contributed by my son to *Scottish Notes and Queries*, giving a full description of this interesting collection.

nor did he ever get out of touch with the simple faith of his earliest years. Mr. Leslie gave a generous support to the church, and to many other claims of a religious and benevolent character. Endowed with great force of character, Mr. Leslie rose from comparatively humble circumstances in life to positions of much influence. He was elected Lord Provost of the city in 1869, and, amongst other public functions connected with that position, he had the honour of conferring the freedom of the city on Mr. Gladstone.

I have noted elsewhere that Mr. Leslie was the architect of Belmont Church, and, besides, he gifted the stained window in the apse. He bequeathed the sum of £200, the interest of which is spent in the purchase of coals for the poor of the church.

Of JAMES WOOD I have only a faint remembrance of seeing him as an oldish man among the deacons at the Communion Table.

JAMES MIDDLETON was deacon for only one year. He was a teacher of music, and in 1838 he went to Canada. He was held in high esteem by the church, and a special prayer meeting was held on the occasion of his leaving. He afterwards entered the ministry, and died at Guelph, Canada, in 1873.

HUGH ROSS was one of a band of contemporary deacons remarkable for their long continued devoted services to the church. Mr. Ross was Church Treasurer for seventeen years, the excellent Superintendent of the Sabbath School, and a tactful man of affairs. Being musical, he took a great interest in the improve-

ment of the service of praise. In certain lines of literature he was well read, and could, when the occasion served, acquit himself well as a public speaker. Mr. Ross was in the Town Council several terms, and was a magistrate. He was cut down in a moment in the street, in the midst of his activities, and the church engrossed in its minutes "its high estimate of his long and varied services, always cheerfully rendered, and now with admonitory suddenness brought to an end."

JAMES MURRAY, Senior. In early life, during the period when the zeal for missionary work was an active element in our church life, Mr. Murray had views of entering the foreign field. For this purpose, along with Mr. Charles Hardie (his future brother-in-law), Mr. Murray made considerable studious preparations. Although he was ultimately diverted from his original purpose, the culture thus attained was not lost. It enabled him to take an efficient part in many church and benevolent activities. Among the latter, the Rechabite movement and the Temperance Society, of which he was for some time president, had always his warm support.

The Sabbath School was a sphere in which he delighted. He was apt to teach, and was superintendent for six years. Mr. Murray was a fluent and an ornate speaker. He often took the pastor's place at the Wednesday evening meeting, and there were few pulpits of our faith and order in the country round, in which he did not officiate on occasions. He was a kindly, lovable, unselfish man, ever for peace, and "with a life-long passion to do good," to quote from

the church minute recording his death. It may with truth be said that he wore himself out in his endeavours to compass the wellbeing of his fellow-men. Mr. Murray died in 1881, after being in the diaconate 40 years.

Regarding WILLIAM ROBINSON, I can glean no information—nor have I any personal knowledge of him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CO-PASTORATE OF MR. THOMSON AND MR. ARTHUR, 1839-1853.

READING between the lines, it is not difficult to see that although Mr. Thomson was still on the right side of sixty, his thirty-six years of preaching was now beginning to tell. It was felt both by himself and the church that it would be for the benefit of both if he were relieved of the strain of preparing and preaching three discourses every week.

It was not, however, till August, 1838, that any definite action was taken. Dr. John Morison of London was then consulted, and it was at his recommendation that Mr. Campbell of Cheltenham was invited to visit Aberdeen, with a view to his being called to the collegiate charge. Before the year closed Mr. Campbell officiated for a few weeks, but, as some opposition was indicated, it was deemed inexpedient to present a call, which he would only have accepted if unanimous.

Shortly after this decision, Mr. David Arthur, who had just completed his studies at the Glasgow Academy,

was brought under the favourable notice of the church, and he was invited to make a prolonged visit. His name does not appear on the church records till February, 1841, when he was asked to renew his services for six months longer. In June, when Mr. Arthur intimated his reluctance to again renew his probationary engagement, the church at once framed a cordial call to him to settle permanently as co-pastor with Mr. Thomson, "whose increasing years and bodily infirmities" disabled him from performing his duties so effectively as before. The call was signed by 266 members, and the salary offered was £100. The call was accepted after a lengthened correspondence, which is a model of frank, deliberate and reasonable explications of the mutual responsibilities and obligations necessariiy subsisting in such a triple alliance as that on which the parties were entering. One happy result of this clear understanding was that the collegiate relation, which subsisted for twelve years, was never once strained, but worked out with the utmost harmony.* Indeed, the real relationship was that of father and son.

Mr. Arthur's ordination took place on the 18th of August, 1841, and is the only ordination to the pastorate in the history of the church. The officiating brethren were the Rev. Mr. Gowan of Blackhills, who led in prayer; the Rev. Dr. Russell of Dundee, who

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* Mr. Arthur says:—"For 12 long years . . . we have stood in the closest spiritual relation to each other, and our intercourse has never been interrupted by a quarrel, nor the sunshine of our friendship darkened by the clouds of contention and strife. Scarcely ever had we a collision of sentiment, and never even a momentary coolness."—[Funeral Sermon].

preached the introductory sermon. The ordination questions were asked by Mr. Thomson, who offered prayer. The new pastor was addressed by his elder brother, the Rev. John Arthur of Helensburgh, while the Rev. (now Dr.) John Kennedy of Blackfriars Street, the only survivor of the group, addressed the church. The ministers dined together, and in the evening an enjoyable social meeting (the first of the kind) was held in the chapel, at which about 500 were present, with "a large array of ministers of different denominations."

Mr. Arthur was a native of Johnstone, near Glasgow, and was born in 1806. In early life he was engaged in mill-service, in the course of which an accident deprived him of a finger. As a lad in his teens he was a great reader, a habit that naturally led up to systematic studies, and these in their turn to teaching engagements. For several years Mr. Arthur was a tutor in a ladies' boarding establishment, conducted by his brother at Helensburgh. During this period he became a student at Glasgow University, and subsequently at the Glasgow Theological Academy, of which Greville Ewing and Dr. Wardlaw were then the "tutors."

Mr. Arthur entered on his pastorate as a mature man of 35, with all the advantages arising from a protracted period of study and educational discipline. In many respects he was the natural complement of his venerable colleague. He introduced a needed note of modernity, answering completely the expressed desire of the church that "an efficient agency might be kept in operation commensurate with the growing intelligence of the age." One needs only refer to the

representative diaconate sketched in the previous chapter to indicate the general calibre of the audience of that day. It was at once intelligent and appreciative, but several years elapsed before Mr. Arthur's ministry took any efficient hold of the public. In time, however, his thorough preparation for his pulpit work, into which he imported the best results of his extensive reading, gradually came to distinguish him as an informed, instructive and attractive preacher. Add to this his own impressive personal appearance, a careful diction, delivered in an unconventional style, and with a kind of natural oratory, the outward expression of the power of a truth that he *felt* to be dominant, and we have a key to that popularity which, when it came, did so, in no niggard fashion. From 1845 to 1860 the evening audiences especially crowded the church to the pulpit door. They were composed of all sorts and conditions of men—people from all the churches, including Catholics—and people of no church, including strangers within the city gates. "Mr. Arthur's Lectures" were an outstanding feature of the church life of the time. He raised the standard of preaching in Aberdeen. Where he was least successful, was in speaking to the very young. In his occasional sermons and addresses he seemed to lack the art and aptitude of speaking to the level of their understanding. He was far more in sympathy with the condition and needs of young men and women. To them his periodical deliverances were suitable and helpful. As a manly man himself, yet possessing a tender timbre, the note he struck was faithful.

Few men knew better how to touch the prevailing

mood of an audience, whether by a tender handling or by a piquant sarcasm, as the occasion served. He believed that every sermon should embody a presentation of Gospel truth. In his own epigrammatic way he used to say that the Gospel was so simple that "it could be understood as soon as it was heard, and believed as soon as it was understood." Few of his sermons missed a personal appeal. At times he affected the peroration, and with more or less success. I remember one, when, after describing all that had been done for man's redemption, embracing, of course, the great Sacrifice, with all that it implied, the preacher eloquently inveighed against the fatuous and fatal indifference which so many manifested in regard to the gospel offer, and faithfully pointed out the mighty risks they incurred. He then clinched the whole with the apt quotation,* solemnly and effectively rendered—

"Be gone;
"Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
"Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
"That must needs light on this ingratitude."

This reminds me that Mr. Arthur had his literary passions. In poetry these were Shakespeare and Pope. In the region of history, towards which he had a strong bias, Gibbon was a favourite, although he often combatted his opinions. Among the Puritan divines, John Owen stood first in his esteem, with Sibbes a good second, possibly as a quaint stylist. Among moderns—Chalmers, Wardlaw, and Alexander were his preferences. In science he was not all unlearned

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* *Julius Cæsar*, Act. I., Scene I.

—both Geology and Medicine shared his interest. I should add that as a scholar the Greek Classics were familiar and admired. Mr. Arthur's large library was at the service of the studious, and the heart affluence of a discursive talk with him in a leisured hour revealed and drew one to the human-ness of the man.

Where Mr. Arthur, perhaps, most excelled, was at the Wednesday prayer meeting. In the "little vestry," hallowed by a hundred memories, divested of all official insignia, in the deshabile of a black neckcloth, and mentally divested of all idea of preaching or rhetoric, in a half-hour's easy and familiar talk he exhibited the richest qualities of his mind, and his deepest experiences of divine things — obtaining therefor responsive appreciation from all who were privileged to attend. Mr. Arthur became much interested in the revival movement which took effect in the north during the later fifties, and most willingly gave such men as Duncan Mathieson, Brownlow North, Grant of Arndilly, and Lord Kintore, all the encouragement that free access to church and pulpit could give. Indeed, George Street Chapel was for a good many years the acknowledged centre of religious, intellectual and literary activities. The Young Men's Christian Association ran several courses of their lectures there, and celebrities like Thomas Cooper, Elihu Burrit, Arthur Mursell, and others, found in "George Street" larger audiences than could be convened elsewhere.

The controversy of 1845, which ended in the formation of the Evangelical Union body, proved a time of considerable tension, and caused the withdrawal of not a few members. Church was divided against church,

house against house. Both Mr. Thomson and Mr. Arthur, although in rather varying degrees, adopted the conservative view of the questions at issue. They both justified their attitude by a series of sermons bearing on the polemic, but without any bitterness.* I feel persuaded—in Mr. Arthur's case at least—that, had he survived, he would have offered no bar to the re-union of the two bodies, now happily effected after half-a-century's estrangement.

While Mr. Arthur's chief concern lay in a most conscientious fulfilment of all that the church could possibly demand of him, he found many other opportunities of useful activity. He was an acceptable public lecturer, and was heard with respect on any platform that commanded his sympathy. As a man of affairs, his official and business arrangements in connection with the Union and denominational affairs were always efficient. The same may be said of the Northern Association of Churches and of the London Missionary Society, for both of which he was long local secretary. His sagacity and good sense pointed him out as the natural adviser in most questions of difficulty among churches in the north. He was liberal-minded and open-handed, and often generous beyond his means.

On the 13th of February, 1853, the church was deprived by death of the faithful services, continued for 33 years, of its much-loved senior pastor, *Il pastor*

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* On 29th April, 1845, the church resolved, "although with sorrow and regret, not to recognize them [the churches of Blackhills and Printfield] as sister churches."

fido, the Rev. Alexander Thomson.* On Mr. Arthur then devolved the sole charge—a charge which, although he was repeatedly tempted to quit, he never once harboured a thought of leaving.

The Deacons who were elected during the co-pastorate of Mr. Thomson and Mr. Arthur were:—

1844.—William Marshall.	1849.—John Marshall.
" James Mathieson.	" James Keith.
" James Melvin.	" James Riddell.

William Marshall I remember well as a teacher in the Sabbath School. I think he and his two sons, Allan and John, were all engaged in the same duty at the same time.

James Mathieson and James Melvin have left no impress on my mind. The latter I can just recall as an old man.

John Marshall. The bare mention of this name always recalls to those who were privileged to know

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* The church bore the expense of the funeral, and also erected a tablet in the Spital burying ground, where he is interred, inscribed as follows:—

To the Memory of
the late
Rev. Alexander Thomson,
who died Feb. 13th, 1853,
in the 72nd year of his age
and the 50th of his ministry.
Erected by the Congregational Church,
George Street, Aberdeen,
of which he was Pastor
33 years.

On the occasion of Mr. Thomson's death, Mr. Arthur preached his funeral sermon from the text, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The sermon was published, at the urgent request of the church, with an appended memoir by Mr. Patrick Thomson.

the man an image of a very gracious, amiable personality. His whole bearing betrayed the gentle, refined, quietly capable man he was. It was in his capacity as a teacher in the Sabbath School, away back in the forties, that I knew him best. On the days when it was Mr. Marshall's "turn at the desk," a hushed expectancy pervaded the school that a well-prepared lesson would be given, attractive in form, and fittingly illustrated by anecdote, dear to the child mind. He was beloved by his own class, and popular with the whole school, which was very large in those days. Mr. Marshall stood high in the esteem of the church, which he efficiently served in many ways, among others as secretary and as treasurer. There was but one feeling of deep regret when business exigencies compelled Mr. Marshall to leave for Newcastle. He died in Aberdeen a few years ago.

JAMES KEITH was a very staid, rather self-contained man. He was, however, very faithful in the discharge of his duties. He was long a Sabbath School teacher, and, although painstaking and instructive, was less genial than young people like. Punctual, methodical, steadfast, Mr. Keith was not easily moved from his opinions. He left the church in 1865, having strongly opposed the new chapel scheme. He then joined the Albion Street Church, where he remained a helpful member till his death in 1891, at 75 years of age. In his early life, Mr. Keith was a partner with Messrs. William Matthews & Son, but for forty years was confidential clerk to the Granite Works in which Mr. William Leslie was so long interested.

JAMES RIDDELL. This worthy man came from the Rhynie church. He belonged to the class of *bona fide* working men, and one can imagine the poet had such a prototype in view when he penned *The Village Blacksmith.* James did not possess "much learning." His education was largely the result of his church life. He was deeply religious, and though grave, calm, and "troubled about many things," he was not unhappy or unpleasant. He took a serious view of life, and his unobtrusive manner won for him a high degree of respect, not only among his brethren, but in other relations of life. James had a scientific turn, and, in order to promote the moral and material interests of his young fellow-workmen, used to hold classes at his home, where he taught them all he knew. In the "little vestry" I still see James in his accustomed seat, his long head (on which there was not a hair between him and heaven) silhouetted against the library door.

On recording his death, which occurred on 25th May, 1870, the church resolved to give, by permanent record, expression to the esteem in which he was held, and the confidence which was reposed in him by his brethren, as one who in temper and disposition was calm, self-possessed, and discreet; as a man and a workman — honest, industrious, and upright; as a disciple of Christ—humble, unpretending, and devout; as a member of the church—devoted to its interests, and a lover of its peace; and who, for many years, as an office-bearer, won for himself a good degree by the faithful and loving performance of all the duties that devolved on him from the office which he held.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOLE MINISTRY

OF THE REV. DAVID ARTHUR, 1853-1874.

MR. THOMSON'S death at once raised the question of the public Sabbath services. Mr. Arthur frankly confessed himself unequal to the arduous task of preaching three times every Lord's day, as all his predecessors had done.*

It was finally arranged that the services should be held morning and evening, with an extra service on the afternoon of the first Sabbath of each month, at the close of which the Lord's Supper was to be observed. This plan was continued for about twelve years.

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* After a careful consideration of the subject, a vote of the church was taken, when it was found that, out of a membership of 258,

195 preferred Morning and Evening Services.
39 preferred Morning and Afternoon Services.
8 preferred Three services as before.
7 were indifferent.
2 declined to vote, and there were
7 whose opinions could not be ascertained.

REV. DAVID ARTHUR.

From a Photograph.

In 1854 there still remained a chapel debt of about £400, but the old fallacy regarding such obligations, as of advantage to the church, was coming to be repudiated. A financial scheme for the liquidation of this sum was therefore arranged, and by a little persistent effort for two or three years the last of the debt was finally got rid of.

The annual social meeting of the church, held on 22nd February, 1859, was memorable. On that occasion Mr. Arthur was made the recipient of tangible expressions of the esteem of his people. Referring to my diary of the period, I find that Mr. Hugh Ross spoke first, I followed, then Mr. Belcher. We were succeeded by Mr. John Leslie, the senior deacon. He first sketched the origin and history of the church. He alluded to its prosperous condition, which he held to be due, by God's blessing, to the preaching and efforts of the pastor. Then, addressing Mr. Arthur personally, and in the most feeling manner, in the name of the church and congregation he presented him with a silver salver, suitably inscribed, and a purse of fifty sovereigns, along with a handsome ring to Mrs. Arthur. "It was most touching" [says this diarist] "to hear the old man speak as a father to a son, wishing him all success and prosperity for the future, and hoping that when the great day of assize came he would be there with a numerous company of those who, by his instrumentality, had been led to embrace the truth. They then shook hands, and sat down amidst great applause. Being moved, Mr. Arthur's reply was at first rather incoherent, but, later, collected and happy. He thanked the church

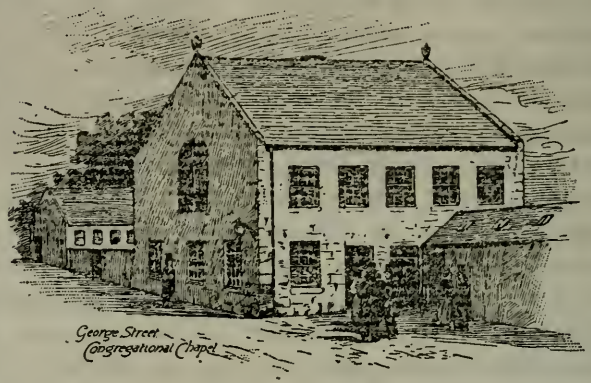
(for himself and his wife) for the generous gifts, and especially Mr. Leslie, who had 'excelled himself,' for his more generous words. When he sat down, I thought the applause would never have done. Mr. William Leslie and Mr. James Riddell each added a few words before the pleasant meeting broke up."

At a like social occasion, three years later, Mr. Arthur, for the first time in public, expressed a feeling that had been growing—that the period had arrived when the propriety of erecting a new place of worship should be seriously considered. He stated his case admirably, and seemed to carry the sympathy of the meeting with him. There were, however, a few to whom the proposal was not very grateful. For them the old place had its associations and attractions, which none other could possess. They had made sacrifices for it, sacrifices which now seemed to be thrown away, and they had scarcely courage to face new obligations that were likely to run into several thousands of pounds. The question was kept an open one for more than a year, but on 1st June, 1863, at a meeting specially convened for the purpose of giving instructions to sell the church property, Mr. William Leslie proposed, and Mr. John Bulloch, Sen., seconded, a motion for powers to sell, whilst Mr. James Keith proposed, and Mr. John Leslie seconded, a counter motion. The result was that 55 voted for the motion, and six against it. Ultimately the opponents gave way and became reconciled, with the exception of Mr. James Keith, who, with his family, left the church. Owing to the opposition, however, an Act of Declarator had to be sought in the Court of Session to enable the trustees to intromit with the matters involved.

A church building committee was appointed to prosecute the undertaking. After considerable trouble a suitable site was obtained in Belmont Street, at a cost of 1000 guineas, and Mr. William Leslie was commissioned to prepare plans and specifications for the building. Besides contributing generously to the funds, Mr. Leslie gave his professional services free of charge. Including the price of the site, the final cost of Belmont Chapel amounted to about £5600. To meet this the contributions from the church and congregation came roundly to £2000. Mr. Arthur contrived to raise about £1500 by personal appeals to friends at home, and also in England, which he visited twice. The sale of the old chapel property yielded about £500, and the trustees of the Ferguson Bequest gave a grant in aid of some £300. In March, 1872, a bazaar was held, which realised £550. The last of the debt was paid off in 1877, by a very unexpected and grateful windfall, namely, a bequest of £1296, under the will of Mr. William Clark, a member of the Established Church, in affectionate memory of his wife, who, as Miss Ann Mackie, was formerly an amiable and respected member of George Street. The balance of this money provided funds also for the purchase of an organ.

On Sunday, the 20th August, 1865, Mr. Arthur conducted the closing services in George Street Chapel, which had been open continuously for a period of sixty-seven years. The occasion was one that, whatever the sentiments regarding the new departure, induced a sense of pensive regret. The house itself possessed not a single beautiful feature, nor a graceful line, nor one

element congenial to the æsthetic nature ; still, to some, its very dust was dear, and to the majority quitting, implied a severance from certain spiritual influences, from certain intellectual stimuli, and from certain personal experiences and friendly associations that could not possibly be transferred to the new environment. "The old order was changing and yielding place to new." Still, memory treasures much. I do not find it difficult to think myself back to our corner pew in the old place, where, as a child, I amused myself counting



the people between us and the further wall, an easy arithmetical problem in a sparsely filled house, or later, when the same preacher "drew" till seats and passages were filled to excess. I can re-people all the pews with the old familiar faces. Here sat "the Leslies," in a pew that refused to hold them all. I can see John Parkhill in the adjoining pew, troubled with his breathing, find relief by standing erect for ten minutes in the middle of the service, with folded arms, monarch of all he surveyed. In the same section, Hugh Ross

and family, with John Levy and James Dalgarno near by. In the area Granny Low might be seen, the last, I think, to affect the close mutch and cloak. Across the kirk the stalwart figures of John Ledingham and William Walker I see. Upstairs, the "side breist" within my view was well filled by the Marshall group, and latterly by the Esplin family. There also I see Mr. William Matthews, Jun., steadiest of hearers, with spotless white vest setting off his pure complexion. Behind them all I see good, old, keen, quaint David Milne, who, for age and other characteristics, might readily represent the "original nine." Of the same kin was Sandy Paul, the serious, active, devoted minister's beadle. These two seemed to belong to other worlds than ours. It would be odd if they could not have given one points, and good points too, from the 18th century.

If we cannot endorse *all* that Wordsworth says in the following lines:—

> "All that I saw returns upon my view,
> "All that I heard comes back upon my ear,
> "All that I felt this moment doth renew:"

still, it costs no great effort to recall the substantial and the valuable. Nor are we to be dismayed although we cannot recall the literal forms, the *ipsissima verba* of all that we heard. We must reconcile ourselves to the belief that it all went to better our general modes of thinking and feeling, and Christian acting. In this spirit we make the new departure, and simply transfer the roof-tree from the old home to the new.

It does not need the historian to point out that Belmont Street Chapel is in every respect a vast

improvement on its predecessor. It is built in a fine open situation. The style of architecture is Romanesque, one common among the early Christian churches. The material is our grey granite, the dressed work being of freestone. Its extreme length is 95 feet, by 50 feet wide, capable of seating about 800 persons. An under floor affords ample conveniences in a fine hall and vestries. The fabric has been criticised as "not imposing, but pretty and appropriate for its purpose." The opening services took place on Sunday, 27th August, 1865. Admission was obtained by tickets. At the morning service, Mr. Arthur conducted the devotional exercises, and Dr. Lindsay Alexander preached from Acts ix. 31, "So the church throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied." His discourse was virtually an answer to the question, What is a Church? Rev. Robert Spence of Dundee preached in the afternoon, and the Rev. Dr. Batchelor of Glasgow in the evening. The collections for the day amounted to £164.

On the following Tuesday evening a social meeting was held in the East Room of the Music Hall Buildings. Mr. Arthur occupied the chair. Addresses were delivered by Dr. Batchelor, the Rev. Robert Spence, the Rev. John Miller, Inverurie, and the Rev. David Wallace. The Rev. John Hunter, Frederick Street, the Rev. Thomas Gilfillan, Blackfriars Street, and others, were on the platform.

Two years later (1867), Mr. Arthur was appointed Chairman of the Congregational Union.

BELMONT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

FRONT VIEW.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberdeen.

After serving the church about thirty years, Mr. Arthur began to feel the duties and responsibilities of the position to be too much for his declining energies. He never was physically of a robust type, and during the last decade of his ministry often preached under deep bodily distress, when it was but little suspected. But although he was the last to complain, for his own sake, he had a sentiment, that did honour to his conscientiousness, that for the sake of the church he should be the first to reveal the fact of a felt inability to fulfil all his duty to her. He could not brook outliving his usefulness, and he believed that the time had come when he might at least secure a measure of relief.

On laying his views before the church, it was resolved to obtain the services of a young man as an assistant. Several who had been students at the Edinburgh Theological Hall were heard. Drs. Halley and Kennedy were corresponded with, and eventually the choice of the church fell on Mr. Frederick Sidney Morris, a young Englishman, whose father had been a well-known Congregational minister. Mr. Morris had been at business for some years in London, but, resolving on a ministerial career, studied at Cheshunt College under Dr. Reynolds. He remained only about a year with us, when he accepted a call to the pastorate of the church at Montrose. Mr. Morris left a pleasant impression behind him. His preaching was scarcely of the kind familiar to a Scottish audience, and it had a lay character which, in the opinion of some, detracted from his influence. He was esteemed, however, as

genial and very lovable, a gentleman of high principle, and true to his convictions.*

During the sole pastorate of Mr. Arthur, the following were elected deacons:—

1857.—William Walker.
" James McNaughton.
" James Dalgarno.
" Alexander Leslie.
" John Park.
1866.—Joseph Tennant.
" William Clark.
" Lawrence Tulloch.
1866.—Robert Smith.
" Alexander Farquhar.
1868.—John Leith.
1872.—John Bulloch.
" Alexander Pardy.
" James Murray, Jun.
" David Johnstone, M.D.
" Alexander Robb.

William Walker was a man possessed of excellent native abilities, but unprivileged in the important element of education. Otherwise he would have shone in almost any profession. In early life he learnt the trade of umbrella-making, then for several years he sailed as steward on the London smacks, a period prolific of experiences, which in after years pointed many a moral and adorned many a tale. He next saw much of the seamy side of life as a sergeant in the police force. He used to descant on the deteriorating influence of this experience. After leaving the force, he betook himself to his early craft, which he plied for a very long period. Mr. Walker's first church connection was with Gilcomston Chapel of

* During Mr. Morris's pastorate at Montrose he married Mr. Arthur's eldest daughter. He afterwards obtained a charge in England, but left on a serious change of theological views. He finally became minister of the Unitarian Church at York. During his latter years Mr. Morris entered largely into public life, and was much engaged in lecturing on political, social, and literary topics. He even contested (unsuccessfully) a seat in Parliament in the Liberal interest in the election of 1892. Mr. Morris published, with the author's permission, a volume of selections from the writings of Ouida. He died at York in 1893.

Ease, under Dr. Kidd, but he was soon attracted to George Street by the ministrations of Mr. Thomson. When he "lifted his lines" from Gilcomston, Dr. Kidd learnt where his parishioner was going to worship. "Well, well," he said, "I can't gainsay your choice, go and God bless you." From that time (1826) till his death, 58 years later, Mr. Walker may be said to have lived for the church, generously devoting to it his means, time and talents. William was for many years Treasurer of the Poor's Fund, and as such was easy of access and helpful. He had great sympathy with the young, and was bound up in the Sabbath School. He combined much mental strength with an emotional nature, and in school his admonitions were not the less powerful though given with the "greet in his throat." The only other interest that seriously competed with that of the church was the temperance cause, of which he was a champion, who knew both sides of the question. In this crusade he had the moral support of many of his co-deacons, notably James Murray, James Keith, and William Clark. His little shop in the Schoolhill became a rendezvous of various coteries, who discussed questions of interest, but William was the acknowledged leader. He was ready and vivacious, and possessed a strong vein of humour. He was a man of fine personal appearance, and of courtly manners. Said some one in a complimentary spirit—"You 've been a good-looking man in your day, William." The ready reply was—"Aye, aye, the devil told me that 40 years ago." His declining years, although years of frailty, were an object lesson in Christian faith and manly courage.

When he died in 1884, he was one of the oldest members of the church, and its senior deacon.

JAMES MCNAUGHTON came from Dundee in pursuit of his business, which was that of an engineer. He was a quiet, peace-loving man. He did a good deal in the church in promoting a better service of praise. He was for many years in a delicate state of health, and on his retirement from business he received a testimonial, which embodied a high tribute in the expression that in dealing with his men he had "never called them by a worse name than their own." He died in 1875.

JAMES DALGARNO. The opportunity is very grateful for perpetuating the memory of this most modest man by a brief tribute to his worth. He first impressed me by a speech he delivered at a social meeting in the church in the early fifties. He certainly did not possess any very popular qualities, but his speech redeemed the meeting, and bespoke an earnest, thoughtful man—an opinion I never had any reason to modify. Mr. Dalgarno was at that time reading with a view to admission to the Glasgow Academy, along with his friend, Mr. John Levie. Mr. Levie was admitted, but died while yet a student. Mr. Dalgarno was rejected. He taught for a few years in the Sabbath School, where his informed and disciplined mind proved of great benefit not only in teaching his own class, but to the teachers themselves. To the loss of the school, and the regret of the church, Mr. Dalgarno died in 1859 at a comparatively early age.

BELMONT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

INTERIOR.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberdeen.

ALEXANDER LESLIE joined the church during Mr. Arthur's ministry, having been formerly a member of the Established Church. His connection with us lasted for about fifteen years — till his removal to Edinburgh in 1871. Mr. Leslie took a fair share of the current work of the church. As a teacher in the Sabbath School, he was both interesting and instructive. He was an attractive speaker, and possessed a remarkable gift of prayer. He died at Aberdeen about a dozen years ago.

JOHN PARK, a well-known and much esteemed deacon of the church at Fraserburgh, was, on coming to Aberdeen in 1857, appointed to the same office. He remained but a few years with us, and died in 1877.

WILLIAM CLARK, a native of Midmar, was a man of mark in many respects. The child of parents of intensely religious character, brought up to plain country work, Mr. Clark came to town while yet in his teens. He was early attracted to the highly evangelical preaching of the "New Views," and threw himself with all his energetic nature into that movement. Conceiving the idea of entering the ministry of that body, he so far prepared himself by private study as to be admitted to their Theological Hall, where he enjoyed the teaching for one session of Dr. James Morison at Kilmarnock, the founder of the body. Before the next session, Mr. Clark undertook a teaching engagement in Aberdeen, which so prospered under him that he did not return to the Hall. It is a tribute to the original cast of his mind, and his rational

methods of teaching, that his school attracted pupils from all parts of the town and neighbourhood, to whom he endeared himself in no ordinary way. The temperance cause attracted him early, and it is not too much to say that for many years that movement had no more powerful or eloquent exponent of its principles. He was a born speaker, whether from the platform or pulpit.* His zeal outran his strength, and, in consequence, his health gave way, and he had to relinquish school teaching and public speaking for some years. In 1858 he left the E.U. body and joined George Street Church. It had long been felt that we suffered for want of a Bible Class, and in Mr. Clark one was found at once able and willing to take it up. Possessing the supreme qualification of a strongly attractive nature, and deep sympathy with young people, he soon drew round him a large and interesting class, members of which to this day speak of their teacher's personal interest in them, in terms of warm affection and gratitude. The class was maintained for about a dozen years, until Mr. Clark's health declined Few public men were better or more favourably known than William Clark, and the melancholy circumstances attending his comparatively early death (23rd Sept., 1882), drew forth universal sympathy. It is impossible to forget the lane of weeping men and women through

* Mr. Clark possessed a ready pen, and his contributions to the *Christian News* and the local papers were numerous. He also wrote several pamphlets, the better known of which were one condemnatory of Prize Giving in Schools, and one entitled *The Missing Link in Spurgeon's Theology*. He was combative in a large-hearted way, and it can truly be said that he never imported into any controversy a spirit of personal bitterness.

which his remains were borne to the grave. It was a touching proof of strong attachment.

ALEXANDER FARQUHAR was a man of varied experiences. In early life he had been led astray, but, coming under happier influences, turned from his folly. He joined the church at Woodside, but in 1862 came to us, and in 1880 returned to Woodside again. He was a man of considerable force of character, and in public speaking could acquit himself with verve. He made himself useful at our mission meetings, and the temperance question was one which he delighted to promote.

ALEXANDER ROBB belonged to a Quaker stock in the Garioch, and exhibited not a few of the worthy characteristics of that respected community. After an absence of some eighteen years in Sweden, Mr. Robb came home in 1860, when he joined the church. Possessed of an eminently judicial, not to say legal, type of mind, Mr. Robb proved himself a valuable member and office-bearer at certain crises. On the occasion of his death, the following appreciation was engrossed in the Minute Book:—Resolved to express "our sense of the loss we experience in the removal of one who not only as a deacon, and for more than 12 years the secretary of the church, performed the duties pertaining to these offices with painstaking fidelity, but who as a man of singular uprightness, rare transparency, coupled with manly independence, as among the more conspicuous traits of his Christian character, was worthy of our deepest respect, and of this commemoration of it."

LAWRENCE TULLOCH was a native of North Maven, Shetland, and in 1852 came to Aberdeen and joined the church. Mr. Tulloch was a man of very few words, indisposed to any very active part in church duties, yet none the less deeply interested in its work, especially its city mission work, to which he generously contributed. When Mr. Tulloch died in 1885, the church recorded its "sense of the loss sustained in the death of one so attached to it, and so anxious for its best interests, for," says the minute, "in the rear of a singularly modest and retiring disposition, those who knew Mr. Tulloch most intimately found him possessed of those qualities of sincerity, integrity, and warm faith, which gave added weight to his character and influence, both as a man and a member of a Christian society."

Before closing this chapter, which ends the connection with our first place of worship, and begins that of the present one, I may add one or two particulars. After we left, George Street Chapel was used for a short time by the Kirk Session of the West Parish as a mission preaching station. For many years it has been used as a House of Refuge, managed by a local benevolent association.

It also deserves to be gratefully noted that the first Communion service observed in Belmont Street Chapel was graced by a set of handsome tankards and cups, the generous gifts of Mrs. David Dunn and the late Miss Catherine Russell, of gracious memory.

BELMONT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

Back View.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberdeen.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REV. JAMES BARTON BELL, 1874-1876.

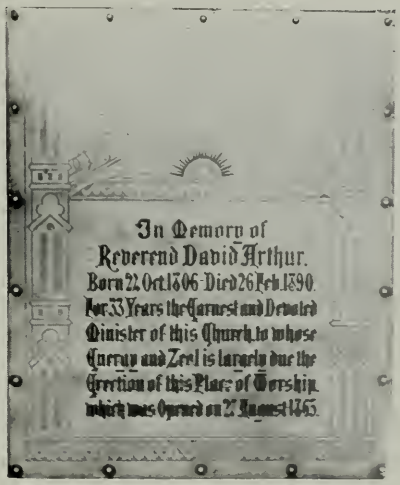
MR. ARTHUR'S increasing infirmities induced a new and more serious view of the situation. It involved his resignation, and the appointment of a regularly-ordained successor in the ministry. Several likely ministers were heard by deputations, consisting of Mr. William Leslie, Mr. James Matthews, Mr. John Leith, and Mr. Bulloch. Eventually Mr. Bell of Aberfeldy, who had been brought under our notice, was favourably reported on and invited to preach. After being heard, he received a unanimous and cordial call, which he accepted. Mr. Bell was a native of Annan, and, after passing through the curricula of Edinburgh University and our own Theological Hall, had been settled at Aberfeldy for three or four years. Mr. Bell was inducted to the charge here on Wednesday, 10th June, 1874, and introduced to the church on the following Sabbath by Dr. Lindsay

Alexander, his tutor and former pastor, who preached from Romans xvi., ver. 10, "Apelles approved in Christ." On the following evening a Social Meeting was held in the Music Hall, at which our retiring pastor, Mr. Arthur, was presented with the sum of £400, besides a guaranteed annuity for life, and at which the new pastor had an opportunity of being introduced personally to the members.

Mr. Bell's pastorate proved disappointing, and he resigned the charge on the 31st May, 1876. He was shortly after called to the church at Ulverston in Westmoreland, where he still is. Two deacons were elected during Mr. Bell's incumbency, viz.:—

1871.—ANDREW THOMSON (now at Keith) and WILLIAM BOULTON.

Although somewhat to anticipate events, I may say here that after his retirement Mr. Arthur was not long able for public duties. These years of retirement, although accompanied by some of the frailties which attach to age, were years of peace and enjoyment. His faith in the "things that cannot be shaken" remained firm, his craving for a wider range of vision he had leisure to gratify, and his loving interest in his family and friends remained intact. "Kind and genial" is the just tribute of one correspondent, "a man of good sense and no little intellectual power." When suddenly summoned to his death-bed, my doubt as to his consciousness was dispelled by his usual and characteristic enquiry. He passed into his rest on the 26th February, 1890, at the ripe age of eighty-four. A funeral service was conducted in the chapel by Dr. Stark and Dr. Duncan. Mr. Arthur's remains


In Memory of
Reverend David Arthur.
Born 22 Oct 1706 Died 26 Feb 1790.
For 33 Years the Earnest and Devoted
Minister of this Church to whose
Energy and Zeal is largely due the
Erection of this Place of Worship
which was Opened on 27 August 1745.

MEMORIAL BRASS

of the Rev. DAVID ARTHUR, in the Vestibule of the Church in Belmont Street.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberd.

were interred in Allenvale Cemetery, where an obelisk is erected, and inscribed :—

In Memory of
Rev. DAVID ARTHUR,
Minister of
Belmont Congregational Church,
Aberdeen.
Born 24 Oct., 1806.
Died 26 Feb., 1890.
Erected
in affectionate remembrance by
the Congregation and Friends.

"I know whom I have believed."

A few days after his death the following appreciative sonnet, signed "Scotia," appeared in a local newspaper, by an unknown hand :—

In Memoriam.

THE REV. DAVID ARTHUR.

A GREAT kind man is gathered to the fold;
He sleeps that sleep that all the world must sleep
Until that day when, with His trump of gold,
The Lord shall summon from the grave and deep.
Ah! many round his narrow grave will weep,
And weep with justice, for a manly man
Who worked for others—those gather now and reap
The seed he sowed, the works that he began.
The breath is spent, the last faint sigh has passed
Into a stillness—holy, solemn, dread;
The light from out the eagle eye has flashed—
The man, the friend, the preacher now is dead.
Farewell, sleep on, thy life's long course hast run,
Thy work is o'er. Servant of God, well done!

CHAPTER X.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REV. JAMES STARK, D.D.

AFTER a few months' interval the vacancy in the pastorate was filled up by the appointment of our present respected minister, who was inducted to the charge on the 25th May, 1877. Dr. Stark was born at Glasgow in 1838, and received his education at Edinburgh University, also, under Drs. Alexander and Gowan at our Theological Hall. His first charge was at Elgin, where he was ordained on 13th October, 1864. During his eight years' pastorate there, a new chapel and manse were erected.

In 1872 Dr. Stark was called upon to form a church at Dalry in association with Augustine Church (Dr. Alexander's), Edinburgh. There he remained until his translation to Aberdeen. The church has prospered under Dr. Stark's ministry, the membership being larger now than it has ever been. In the midst of his pastoral duties, Dr. Stark has published two volumes of sermons—*Life's Phases* and *Life's Stages*—besides several other works, including the Lives of *Dr. Kidd*

REV. JAMES STARK, D.D.

From a Photograph by Morgan, Aberdeen.

of Aberdeen, *Rev. John Murker of Banff*, and *Rev. John Pillans of Huntly*, and also *Lights of the North.* He was also for several years editor of *The Scottish Congregational Magazine*, and in 1888 was chairman of the Congregational Union of Scotland. In 1896 the University of Aberdeen conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, on which occasion the church presented him with a pulpit gown, and Mrs. Stark with a gold bracelet and a commemorative tea-tray.

During Dr. Stark's ministry the following elections to the diaconate have been made, viz. :—

1878.—William Russell.
" William Macintosh.
" George Christie Leslie.
" Robert Glegg.
1883.—John Leith, Jun.
" James Matthews.
" Ferguson Shinie.
" Edward Westerman.
1887.—Robert Rait Russell.
" James Smith.
" John Smart Smith.
" Alexander G. Souter.
1890.—James Laing Tennant.
" John G. Lawson Whincup.
" Peter Laird.
1893.—John Morrison.
" Alexander Green.
" Thomas Leslie.

Of these, three have died—William Russell, Robert Glegg, and James Matthews.

William Russell was a native of Huntly, and joined our church in June, 1877. He died in January, 1892, a comparatively young man of fifty-three.

Robert Glegg was a native of Stonehaven, and originally a member of the United Presbyterian body. After being in Aberdeen some years, he was attracted to Blackfriars Street Church by the preaching of the amiable and thoughtful Rev. John Thomson. In 1878 he joined our church, and was appointed a deacon the same year. Mr. Glegg's special interest was in the

young, taking a lively concern in their education, both secular and religious. As a Sabbath School teacher he had quite a knack in communicating knowledge, and also a happy faculty in publicly addressing old or young, which he did in a homely, practical, original way. Mr. Glegg was a man of transparent character —honest and "ae fauld," despising pretence. He was at the same time a man of strong convictions, maintained in a self-respecting manner. He died on 27th March, 1885.

JAMES MATTHEWS, LL.D., a nephew of William Matthews, Sen., joined the church in 1845. He was educated at Gordon's Hospital, and became an architect —a profession in which he rose to considerable eminence and popularity. In that capacity his advice and counsel as to the fabric of the chapel was often found to be of great service. Mr. Matthews was a public man, and for many years filled prominent positions in the city, notably, on the School Board and in the Town Council. He was elected Lord Provost in 1883, a position which he filled with great credit. Mr. Matthews was a singularly modest man, courteous in manner, and of refined and cultivated tastes. He received the degree of LL.D. from Aberdeen University in 1896, and at his death, which occurred this year, he was accorded a public funeral by the citizens. Mrs. Matthews, his widow, enjoys the distinction of being the oldest member of our church.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AGENCIES OF THE CHURCH.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

IT may not be without interest to preface the story of our Sabbath School by a brief narrative of the earliest movements of the kind in the town. The first was the formation of The Aberdeen Sabbath School Society, in 1787. It was managed by a committee of ministers of various denominations, and magistrates. Ten schools were established,* attended by about 1500 children, and young persons engaged in factory work, and all of the poorer and neglected classes.

The services were partly religious and partly secular, the subjects taught being Catechism, Music (that is, Singing), Reading and Writing. Besides the superintendents, and friends who gave attendance and help,

* These schools were conducted at Gardeners' Hall, Guestrow, Barbers' Hall, Exchequer Row, the Poors' Hospital (2), Lodge Walk, Longacre, Correction Wynd, and at Footdee. Each school had a "master," with a list of from four to six "superintendents," who probably took turn in their attendance, contributing to the devotional and distinctively religious portion of the service.

professional teachers were employed and paid for their work. If I mistake not, one important feature of the movement consisted in conveying the pupils to church once every Sunday. The Society, however, outlived its usefulness — the number of scholars diminished gradually, till in 1822 the scheme seems to have come to an end.

Ten years later the Gratis Sabbath School Society was established. The operations were initiated by Mr. Coles, one of our English friends mentioned on page 36, who opened the first school of the order on the last day of 1797 in a house in St. Andrew Street. There is a tradition that he incurred some odium by his action, and that he was stoned on the occasion. But the movement soon became popular.* The teaching was purely religious, and so attractive that adults, as well as young persons, attended in large numbers. The young Englishmen, Coles and Page, were experts in the art which they invested with warmth, life and feeling. The Society was maintained by voluntary subscriptions, and continued prosperous for many years, and may even yet have a nominal existence. A special effort was made early in the century on behalf of girls by the Female Sabbath School Society. The teachers were exclusively ladies. This Society must be long since extinct.

The decay of these various associated efforts followed on specific attempts by the individual churches to overtake the religious training of their young. Amongst the first to do so was our own church. The earliest

* In 1805 there were 15 of these schools in town.

efforts were directed not to the children, but to the youth of the church, whom it was deemed necessary and desirable to instruct "in the principles of Christianity," and in matters of Church government. In the spring of 1819 a Sabbath Morning Class with these objects was instituted, with Mr. Matthews as its teacher. The class did not succeed, and the experiment was repeated in 1821, aided by the deacons and some of the members. That, too, became abort. In 1825 Mr. Patrick Thomson and William Matthews, Junior, made another attempt in the same direction. Some 30 or 40 young men came forward, the more advanced of whom were taught by Mr. Thomson. This Bible Class survived till about the time that Mr. Thomson left to pursue his studies at Highbury.

In 1827 the Sabbath School was established for boys and girls, in the vestry, on Sabbath mornings, at nine o'clock. It is a singular fact that the first meeting was attended by only one teacher (Mr. William Duncan, one of the deacons), and by a single scholar, afterwards Mrs. Robert Gilbert. She has told me that Mr. Duncan read a psalm, and gave a running comment on it for the morning's exercise, and, after prayer, dismissed the school. The first regular teachers were Mr. David Davidson, the first superintendent, Mr. John Leslie, and Mr. George Low. By and by lady teachers were introduced. After a few years the hour of meeting was changed to six in the evening, and, after the dismissal of the school, a Bible Class for senior scholars was held. Mr. John Leslie became superintendent in 1839, and three years later Mr. Hugh Ross took up the duty. About that time the Sabbath School library was formed, with Mr. John Marshall as librarian.

In 1845, the school having outgrown the limits of the vestry, the church built a schoolroom in the rear of the chapel, at a cost of £122. In the meantime temporary accommodation was got in the Temperance Hall, George Street, and there between 300 and 400 scholars attended, and were taught by a large and efficient staff of teachers. For several years the new schoolroom was in a crowded condition, scholars of all denominations and from all quarters being in regular attendance. Gradually, however, especially after the Disruption, these extraneans withdrew, leaving only the children of our own communion in attendance. In 1853, when the afternoon service in the church was dropped, the school hour was again changed to half-past two, at which it has since remained. After the long and successful incumbency of Mr. Ross (during which the school was regarded as a model), Mr. James Murray held the position for six years, and Mr. George Watson for two years. In 1864 Mr. Watson left for London, and on the 25th of January of that year the present superintendent was appointed. The removal to Belmont Street was a boon to the Sabbath School. The accommodation and facilities, although not up to modern ideals, are such as to promote efficient work. Separate class-rooms for infant and senior classes are of great advantage.

So far as I am aware, ours is the oldest Sabbath School in Aberdeen, and during its existence of seventy-one years it has pursued an honourable and useful career—a career promotive not only of the moral and religious training of the young, but of culture of the teachers themselves. I am without accurate data as to

the number of teachers and scholars who have passed through the school curriculum, but, on a moderate computation, probably not fewer than 150 teachers and 1500 scholars have shared in the duties and benefits of our Sabbath School. Of recent years the growing difficulty of a successful prosecution of Sabbath School work has been that of securing a sufficient staff of teachers. This is the common experience, and the reasons given for it are various. It is impossible here even to specify these reasons, far less to discuss them. To a bare statement of the present tendency, I may add that one result will inevitably follow the depletion of the ranks of the teachers, and that will be the decimation of the ranks of the scholars—a result deserving the gravest attention of all the churches.

SUPERINTENDENTS.

Mr. David Davidson, 1827-1836. Mr. James Murray, 1856-1862.
Mr. John Leslie, 1836-1839. Mr. George Watson, 1862-1864.
Mr. Hugh Ross, 1839-1856. Mr. John Bulloch, 1864-

THE BIBLE CLASS.

The natural sequel to the Sabbath School is the Bible Class, constituting the necessary link between it and the church. There can be no doubt that the church suffered for want of a Bible Class. At last Mr. William Clark took it up, and till shortly before his death, in 1882, the class presided over by him, comprising a period of about twelve years, was a highly successful one. His leal-hearted, magnetic

influence drew pupils to the class; his fervent earnestness and teaching power kept them an attached, loyal band. Although Mr. Clark was a great stickler for the Bible as the proper text book for a Bible Class, he did not scruple to dilate on topics of public interest, social reform, or even political principles, seeking to indoctrinate the minds of the members with just and serious views in regard to many important questions. Mr. Clark was happy in the receipt of many and tangible tokens of the gratitude of the class for his inspiring influence. The class suffered much during his protracted illness, and, at his death, dissolved, no one forthcoming to take up his peculiar rôle.

In 1882 Mrs. Bulloch took up a Bible Class in the vestry for young women alone, of whom about fifty attended. The principal subjects of study during the seven years of the existence of the class were the Acts of the Apostles, the Book of Revelation, and the history included in the gap between the Old and New Testaments. Much interest was taken in special monthly addresses on prominent missionaries, eminent women, and great Christian poets and hymn-writers.

Two years later a Bible Class for young men was begun by Mr. Ferguson Shinie, and continued for some years by Mr. Robert R. Russell.

After a short interregnum, a mixed class of the young people of the church was commenced in 1893, under the leadership of Mr. Alexander G. Souter. The class has grown steadily in numbers, and at this date about 40 are in regular attendance.

In this connection it remains to be mentioned that Dr. Stark has for six or seven winters held a meeting

with the young people at the close of the evening service. It is well attended, and a short address is given, or a forecast of the Sabbath School lesson for the following week is made, for the benefit especially of teachers who may be present.

HOME MISSION WORK.

The following statement is the substance of an address which I read on the interesting occasion of the opening of our new Mission House in the West North Street, 9th March, 1898. The meeting was attended by many people of the district, as well as by many members of our church and congregation, and sympathizing friends. Dr. Stark occupied the chair, and, after a service of tea, offered the dedicatory prayer, and addressed the meeting. Speeches were also delivered by Mr. William Macintosh, Mr. Robert R. Russell, Rev. Dr. Stewart, and the Rev. Alexander Brown. The statement is as follows:—

One of the names by which our church was known at its formation, 100 years ago, was the "Missionar Kirk." This most aptly described the spirit of the movement under which it was formed, and by which it has been pervaded. The church has been greatly distinguished for the number of its members who became ministers of the gospel at home or in the foreign field; and distinguished also for its interest in Sabbath Schools and in Home Mission work. All along the century, members of the church have cultivated this field, and charged themselves as individuals with the spiritual oversight of the poor and the

neglected. But these more personal and isolated operations were superseded or absorbed in 1859 by an important movement in favour of organized, aggressive city mission work, the result of the united action of all the churches.

In that year a large and representative meeting was held in St. Nicholas Lane U.P. Church, presided over by Mr. Cochran of Balfour, and resulted in the formation of the Aberdeen Evangelistic Association. Its objects were mainly (1) "The extension of missionary operations so that the entire spiritual destitution of the city should be undertaken;" and (2) "To arrange the destitute portions of the city into manageable districts, and to allocate them among those congregations . . . . which shall be willing to co-operate in the work." These and other resolutions were proposed and spoken to by Dr. McGillivray, Dr. Flint, Rev. Henry Angus, Mr. William McCombie, and Mr. A. S. Cook, and passed with enthusiasm. Dr. Edersheim was appointed one of the secretaries. I am thus particular because it is in virtue of this movement that we obtained a territorial right to work this district, and also because I think the religious public need to have their memories refreshed by a recital of these facts, if not incited to a revision of the original scheme. In due course the district allotted to us was the section of West North Street, extending from Littlejohn Street to St. Clair Street, on both sides, a section so clearly defined as to prevent any overlapping of operations by other workers.

This allocation came rather soon for any organized action of the church, and the opportunity was suffered

for several years to pass unimproved. At last Mr. George Watson, then superintendent of the Sabbath School, brought the question before the teachers, who were favourable and willing to take part in the enterprise. Mr. Watson's ill-health and removal postponed action for a time, when his successor in the Sabbath School, along with Mr. Arthur, formulated a scheme of work, which was submitted in 1866 to a meeting of teachers in the pastor's house, and warmly received. Thus, what we now call our *Home Mission Society* was formed, with Mr. Arthur as president. What followed I can now look upon, after a lapse of 32 years, as the very romance of city mission zeal. We may have been somewhat tardy in facing the task ; when we did so it was in no half-hearted way. Nor was our youthful enthusiasm of the sort that "burned itself out by the energy of its own expression." It came to stay. It was a revival of the early missionary spirit of the church, which had not been dead, but only sleeping. Indeed, it gave new life to the church, and greatly cheered the pastor's declining years. We had no great experience, but we learnt the work by doing it, and we very soon found, in certain providential occurrences, that God helps those that help themselves.

Almost at the very moment at which active work began, a gentleman of means in the suburbs of the city, though unconnected with the church, commissioned Mr. Arthur to select and engage a Bible Woman for the district, whose expenses he generously paid out of his own pocket. The person appointed was Miss Elizabeth Cameron, a member of our church, and her help and influence was so great that, from the very

beginning, the meetings of all kinds, both for young and old, were amply attended, and the time of the workers saved for the work proper.

The first meetings were for adults, on a week evening, and the pioneer in this service was our now venerable Friend, Mr. William P. Macdonald, aided by a staff, including Mr. Arthur, who took turn. The use of an upper room for the purpose was kindly granted by a seaman's wife, and it is an interesting fact that the house in which this good woman lived was the very house ultimately bought and pulled down to obtain the site on which this Mission House stands, and in which we are now for the first time met. Our first hired apartment was at No. 103, in which we established meetings for boys and girls on four evenings a week, besides a Sunday School and the meeting for grown-up people.

A very few months convinced us that we must have more elbow room, both to meet the growing numbers of our scholars, as well as to utilize the plethora of workers who pressed themselves into the service of bettering their fellow-creatures, their own flesh and blood, whose life conditions were less favoured than theirs, but whose interests it was felt to be a Christian duty and pleasure to promote. Accordingly additional accommodation was acquired in a dame's school-room in Mitchell Court. It must be remembered that these were pre-School Board days, and it was very early impressed on us that we must tackle the sadly neglected elementary education of our scholars. It was a stirring time—a time of earnestness, in which the restraining

SHERET'S COURT MISSION,

64 West North Street.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberdeen.

hand had to be applied to more than one whose zeal knew no bounds.*

The superintendents of departments were — Mr. George C. Leslie, Mr. James Edwards, then a student at the University, who, from his experience as a teacher, gave us invaluable aid in many directions. Mr. John Robertson was the first Superintendent of the Sunday School, and Mr. James Hogarth, a gentleman devout and devoted to Christian service, though not a member of the church, was attracted to our mission work, and threw himself into it with great ardour. It soon again became clear that we were still far from being well appointed as to accommodation, and, although search was made throughout the district, nothing more suitable could be found than an apartment in the lower floor of an old house in Sheret's Court. This we hired and entered in 1870, and, although it was externally noisome and forbidding, and internally so dingy as to require artificial light by day as well as by night, yet for 28 years it was the centre and scene of the numerous activities which properly fall to be carried

* By this time we had annexed the Mission Work carried on in Rhind's Court, Gallowgate, under the superintendence of Mr. James Smith, originally for the Students' Missionary Union. This undertaking was outwith our proper sphere of influence, but, as it was not beyond our teaching power, it was entered on heartily, and worked on similar lines to the West North Street Mission. Among the ladies who took an active part in the work were—Mrs. Williamson, Mrs. H. Ross, Mrs. Robb, Mrs. Dunn, and Miss Mathieson. Eventually the Sabbath School became the chief agency of the Gallowgate field, and the successive Superintendents were—Mr. Andrew Thomson, Mr. Boulton, Mr. John S. Sutherland (who also long maintained an excellent Sunday evening meeting), and latterly Mr. Laird. The Gallowgate scheme has now been merged in that of the West North Street.

on at a mission station. In a few years our more strictly secular teaching was rendered unnecessary, and was replaced by other agencies, among which a Mothers' Meeting stands out prominently as one of the most popular and useful. A whole band of ladies laboured in this cause, among whom were—Miss Catherine Tulloch, Mrs. Lyon, Miss I. Catanach, Miss Duff, Miss Glegg, Mrs. Munro, Mrs. Gilchrist, Miss Murray, and many more.

About 20 years ago, Mr. Tester and Mr. Tennant made some strenuous endeavours to secure more suitable premises, even if it implied the erection of a place under more agreeable conditions. Nothing came of it, except that we extended our borders by hiring the upper hall in the same building. This gave a fresh impulse to the work, which by this time was largely under the control of Mr. Alexander S. Munro, who, with colleagues such as Mr. John Goldsmith, Mr. James Mortimer, and others, wrought with unexampled warmth and enthusiasm. Perhaps the most notable feature of these latter-day developments was the greater attention given to the promotion of temperance principles through the Band of Hope and Adult Temperance Society.

It is quite obvious that throughout these years, extending to a generation, a vast amount of energy and self-sacrifice and valuable time were expended by an unbroken succession of zealous workers. The results may not be so obvious, although it is at least reasonable to believe they have been salutary. Indeed, evidence is not wanting that in many cases, both amongst the young and the old, these efforts have

borne manifest fruits in many directions, and have had abiding results in bettered lives.

Five or six years ago a very important development in our enterprise took place, in the appointment of a City Missionary. This was rendered possible by the generous and intelligent interest of Mr. George King, who bequeathed to the Deacons of the church a sum of £500 as a nucleus of a fund for this purpose. I have said nothing hitherto of the fact that the annual expenses of our operations had been borne by individual members of the church. From first to last, I am sure these contributions have amounted to not less than £1000. Mr. King's bequest, however, has naturally caused an enlarged annual contribution from the church, but the gain in having a missionary working in the district, becoming personally acquainted with the circumstances of every household, and the material and spiritual necessities of almost every individual in it, will commend itself to all. The work becomes concentrated, legitimate effort is much more likely to be utilized, and point given to all endeavour to reach such ideals as may be reasonably entertained regarding city mission work. Of course all this is largely contingent on the man who may hold the post. In the appointment of Mr. Thomas Leslie we have been happily and wisely guided. In his presence I shall only add that his popularity with those among whom he labours, and by whom he is associated, testify to his suitability, and that he has found a way of access to the confidence of both. Thus, step by step, has our aggressive action in the West North Street ripened, till, in this year of grace and of centenary celebration,

we have been stimulated to acquire what has long been in our hearts, namely, a local habitation, as well as a name, in this community.

When it was resolved to celebrate the centenary of our church, the most practical method of doing so seemed to be that of raising a fund for the erection of a mission hall. The total expense of these new premises is £1200 or thereby, and towards this we have already contributed the large sum of £1000, with the hope of soon raising the balance.

The fabric will stand examination. It is, in its structure and equipments, worthy of the work, and creditable to those who have compassed it. In the narrative I have submitted of early difficulties and disabilities, of recent advantages and progress, down to the auspiciousness of this red letter day, we have a pertinent gloss on the advice "not to despise the day of small things," and an illustration of the truth that "but for the past the present could not be." A knowledge of both conditions is useful, especially to those on whom the responsibility rests of guiding the future destinies of this mission settlement. But just as this handsome hall, with all its ample facilities, supersedes the primitive appointments of the upper room in the seaman's humble home, so may the ideals and achievements of those who seek here to serve God to-day, far excel the best results attained by those who so served yesterday.

THE POOR'S FUNDS.

Throughout the history of our church the function of "pure religion and undefiled, to visit the fatherless

CENTENARY MISSION PREMISES,

West North Street.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberdeen.

and the widow," has ever been felt as at once a prime duty and a privilege. The claims of the poorer members for sympathy and support have always been liberally recognised. From the day that the infant church, composed of nine members, sat down for the first time to partake of the Lord's Supper, an after-communion offering has been invariably made for the poor.* This collection has all along been the main source of income of the Poor's Fund. George Moir, who had already proved himself, as we have seen, a true friend of the poor, was naturally the first almoner of the bounty of the church. At his death William Matthews, Sen., was appointed his successor, and for twenty-two years was a most devoted treasurer. He too was an active member of the "Sick Man's Friend," a useful discipline in dealing with the poor.

In the early decades of the century there were as many as 30 or 40 persons on the poor's list, most of whom got a monthly dole of 2/6, with additional sums in certain cases for rents. The times were often hard, and claims were numerous. In 1809, an "ill year," the expenditure doubled, owing, says the careful treasurer, to "provisions being very high, and meal two shillings per peck." The ordinary income arising from the Communion collections was at times insufficient to meet all the demands, which in some years amounted to £60 and £70. To make up deficits, special contributions were made, and timely legacies prevented the accumulation of debt. In 1809 Charles Turner gave over £70

* On rising from "the table" it was Dr. Philip's use and wont to remind the members of the collection by saying, "Remember the poor, for the poor ye have always with you."

to the Poor's Fund, and in 1831 Robert Masson devoted £30 as a special fund "for the benefit of poor members confined by sickness to their bed." We suspect the treasurer himself of considerable generosity. For a series of years the sum of five guineas is entered as "from one whose cup overflows," "being a part of much received," "for success in trade," &c., &c.*

In 1843 the Dorcas Society was established, as a useful auxiliary to the Poor's Fund. The members collect and subscribe funds for the purchase of fabrics, out of which the ladies of the society make garments for distribution among the necessitous.

In 1834 the Scottish Poor Laws came into operation, and in an amended form in 1845. These brought some relief to the church, some of the more clamant cases getting aid from the parish. Mr. George King† never was quite reconciled to our members availing themselves of this mode of relief. He did not think it quite creditable to the church, more especially as in later times the number of the necessitous poor has diminished. The ordinary income from the Communion collections,

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* Among the numerous smaller donations to the Poor's Fund I may note one from a humble servant lass, who gives the treasurer ten shillings, "to be equally divided between the poor and the minister's son, Mr. Patrick Thomson."

† *Modern Pauperism and the Scottish Poor Laws. With some Suggestions for the Amelioration and Social Elevation of the People*, by George King, F.S.A., Scot. Inscribed to the Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone. Aberdeen: James Murray, 1871. [74 pp.] Mr. King made a special study of the question of poverty and its relief, the results of which he embodied in a pamphlet, entitled as above. The pamphlet exhibits much knowledge of the subject and its bearings, and does great credit to the author.

CENTENARY MISSION HALL.

INTERIOR.

From a Photograph by John Hardie & Co., Aberdeen.

supplemented by the annual interest on £200 mortified by Mr. William Leslie, are, in the meantime, equal to the demands, the plan of administration being to distribute the whole income of one year during the currency of the next. Although the fund is not one to hoard, we have thus always one year's income in hand, and prepared for any emergency. The successive treasurers of the fund have been :—

George Moir.	George King.
William Matthews.	John Leslie.
William Matthews, Jun.	William Walker.
John Williamson.	John Leith.

John Bulloch.

LIBRARIES.

We have seen that the church owed its origin largely to the informed minds of its founders. They were men who read and thought. To their eternal credit one of the very first things they did was to establish a Library. In October, 1797, and whilst there were as yet only four members of "the meeting," "the conversation turned on the advantages derived from reading useful books, and, in order to make reading more general and less expensive, we agreed to become members in another point of view, viz., as a reading society, to pay two shillings at entry, and sixpence per quarter, to be laid out in purchasing books to be lent amongst ourselves, or others who might in future join us." The rules of the Library were drawn up and a catalogue made out. George Moir had charge of the Library, the nucleus of which was, in all probability,

the books of his own extensive collection. Mr. King states that this was the first religious library in Aberdeen, and was started with over one thousand volumes.

The books were housed in two cases, which flanked the fire-place in the vestry, and it is within my recollection that Sandy Paul, acting as librarian, used on a Wednesday evening to exchange the books of the few readers who survived in the forties. In the fifties the Sabbath School teachers were almost the only persons who availed themselves of the Library. In 1865, when the church removed to Belmont Street, disuse and damp had seriously damaged many of the books. These were weeded out, and the balance transferred. Additions were made of works helpful to the teachers, and of some 600 volumes, gifted by Mr. King. There is a carefully compiled and printed catalogue of its contents, but alas, the librarian's post is a sinecure, for "no man sails to Babylon." A very great change has occurred in the matter of reading since 1797. The apotheoses of the periodical, the newspaper and the novel have been reached. At all events such books as load the shelves of our Church Library are not read by church members now-a-days. If they are, they are obtained in the Free Public Library.

The Sabbath School Library happily remains a living and comparatively thriving institution. It contains about 700 volumes, catalogued in an interesting way. Besides the title, each book is briefly described. The teachers steadily inculcate the advantages of reading habits.

MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT CLASSES.

I do not need to indicate the character or the advantages of such classes. They come under the category of agencies of the church, although their object is more the intellectual and literary than the religious culture they impart. The existence of such classes in our church has been very intermittent. The first serious attempt in this direction was made about 60 years ago, or just about the time of Mr. Arthur's settlement. Strange to say, it was not initiated by the young, but the grown men of the church, among whom were Ebenezer Bain, Hugh Ross, John Bulloch, Sen., George Mann, William Largue, Mr. Newlands, &c., &c. The class lasted for a year or two. I once possessed the minute book of it. It is now lost, but I remember distinctly the routine of essays and debates.

Twenty years elapsed ere the young men of the day set up a similar class. Among the members were John Barron, Alexander Walker, James Murray, Jun., George (now Sir George) King, John and William Bulloch, James Knight, &c., &c. The class subsisted for about two years. It has been succeeded every decade of years since then by a revived movement, but without any continuity. These classes have usually been promoted by a small group of ardent literary spirits, who for a time manage to persuade young men in the church to attend. This they do until some change takes place in the personnel of the founders, and then comes the inevitable break-up. The present decade has witnessed a new departure, namely, the establishment of a literary class conducted by the young women of the church, which has been attended by a considerable measure of success.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SERVICE OF PRAISE.

IN the service of praise a hundred years ago there was more of heart than art. Few of the churches of that period gave much attention to this part of divine service. A precentor with a good leading voice to raise the tune, and able, distinctly, to "read the line," would be all the primitive demands of the early worshippers of George Street Church. So far as the element of music was concerned, "reading the line" was a barbarous custom, an expedient more likely to be resorted to in public services where special hymn books were used, but only in the partial possession of the people. The practice of reading the line, or rather couplet, was not discontinued with us till 1852.

In the early years of the church the question of Praise was subject to the opposing views of a party of progress and improvement *versus* one of a rather conservative cast. In 1818 it is recorded that there had been "some small difference with a few who opposed some alterations in our singing new tunes." Much as this "difference" is minimized by the terms of the record, one can see in it a familiar battleground of conflicting principles, that with certain modifications

are still conflicting, and likely to do so so long as men are differently constituted.

The first precentor mentioned in the minutes is Alexander Mackie. The church dismissed him from his office, but whether or not it was owing to this controversy is not known. The curious thing is that he was restored to his position on a petition in his favour, signed by twenty-eight members.

Mr. Thomson, the pastor, took a deep personal interest in the touchy question of the public praise, and in 1822 he called attention to "the need there was for improvement of the singing." The matter was remitted to himself and the deacons to carry out, but with what result tradition saith not.

The next leader was James Gray, who sang with a great amount of verve once he was fairly started, but starting well was a weak point with him.*

The first substantial steps in the way of improved music was under the precentorship of Mr. Joseph Munro, who was the first, I think, to have the assistance of a choir, whom he trained in the theory of music, and in whose time the reading of the line was dropped. Then came the great wave of Psalmody Improvement, inaugurated by Mr. William Carnie in 1859, which benefited all the churches. During the brief incumbencies of Mr. George Porter, who was a sweet singer, and of Mr. M'Lean, who was an enthusiast

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* Especially was this the case at the weekly practisings. Unabashed by a false start, James used coolly to say "Hoots," and begin again. His phrase became a household word. Any foreboding of possible failure in an enterprise was met with the encouraging admonition—"Never mind, just say 'Hoots' like Jamie Gray, and begin again."

who left his mark in the perfect organisation of the choir, the impulse was utilized and maintained. They were worthily followed by Mr. George Hill, who led the praise for nine or ten years. He was not only tuneful, but, through a fine musical susceptibility, gave a reverent and intelligent interpretation of the sentiments expressed. Finally, instrumental music was introduced in 1878, when the organ was erected.

The Leaders of Praise during the century have been :—

Alexander Mackie,	Precentor.	George Hill,	Precentor.
James Gray,	do.	John Lindsay,	Organist.
James Noble,	do.	Herr Hoffman,	do.
Joseph Munro,	do.	Roland Hirst,	do.
George Porter,	do.	John Allan,	do.
David McLean,	do.		

HYMN BOOKS.

Although one of Dr. Watts's hymns was sung at the opening of George Street Chapel, it is not certain when the church first adopted hymn books, of which there has been a succession of six during the century. When it did so, the choice fell on Dr. Watts's "Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs," with the addition, perhaps, a little later of the Hoxton Supplement. The title of the latter ran :—"Select Hymns, a Supplement to Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, primarily designed for the use of the Congregation assembling in the Chapel, adjoining Hoxton Academy, London." The editor was Thomas Wilson, who built Hoxton Chapel. I quote from the 10th edition. The two books were to be had separately, or bound together. In 1825 Mr. Thomson, the then pastor, proposed the

adoption of Ewing and Payne's Hymns, but this was apparently never carried out. Mr. Greville Ewing had been Mr. Thomson's tutor at the Academy, a circumstance that may have led to his proposal. Mr. Payne was a Congregational minister in Edinburgh. The Hymn Book went through many editions.

The second hymn book introduced was "A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship, by Ralph Wardlaw, D.D., Glasgow. Fullerton, 1841." The third was—"The Hymn Book, prepared from Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns, and other authors, with some originals. London: Ward & Co., Paternoster Row." It is dated from Hackney, 1842, and was adopted probably about 1850. The fourth was—"Hymns Original and Selected, by Andrew Reed, D.D. Ward & Co., London." Dr. Reed was the well-known benevolent pastor of Wycliffe Chapel, London. He was the author of several of the hymns in the book, which, however, was not well edited, and was replaced on 3rd October, 1877, by the fifth hymn book, entitled, "New Congregational Hymn Book, Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship. Published for the Congregational Union of England and Wales by Hodder & Stoughton." It contains 1000 hymns and a supplement of 278 more.

The hymn book in present use, the sixth of the series, is the "Congregational Church Hymnal, edited for the Congregational Union of England and Wales by George S. Barrett, B.A. London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London."

As there is happily no end to Christian song, or to Christian singers, so there is no finality to hymn books suitable for Christian worship.

CHAPTER XIII.

NOTABILIA.

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WHO HAVE ENTERED THE MINISTRY.

AS far back as 1837, Mr. George King, struck with the large number of the members of the church who gave themselves to the work of the ministry at home or abroad, proposed that a record should be entered of all missionaries who had gone out from the church. Although the unfortunate hiatus which occurs in the Church Minutes prevents, now, an accurate enumeration, the actual number ran up to about fifty. The following is what I have been able to glean :—

The Rev. ALEXANDER BEGG was a member of the church under Dr. Philip. He prosecuted his studies at the Glasgow Academy, under Dr. Wardlaw. He was ordained in 1820 to the church at Fraserburgh, where he remained till his death. He was a good man, and held in high esteem.

The Rev. DAVID CAIRD is a native of Montrose, and, as a mere youth, entered the ranks of journalism

as a reporter in Dundee. He was transferred to Aberdeen, as correspondent for the *Dundee Advertiser.* At the same time he attended the full curriculum in Arts at the University here. As a member of our church, Dr. Stark recommended him for the Theological Hall, Edinburgh, in 1885. He was ordained to the church at Perth in 1888. Afterwards Mr. Caird went to Russell Chapel, Dundee, and ultimately settled at Morningside, Edinburgh. Mr. Caird has ably conducted *The Congregationalist* for the past few years, and was one of the most influential promoters of the union between the Evangelical and Congregational Unions of Scotland.

The Rev. DAVID COLLIE was one of the many young men who owed their inspiration and culture for missionary service to Dr. Philip. He finished his preparatory work at Gosport, and was ordained in 1821. The Society appointed Mr. Collie to Malacca, but, on reaching Madras on the way out, his wife died. Arrived at his post, he was appointed Professor of Chinese at the Anglo-Chinese College, and in 1827 became its Principal. Ill-health rendering a return to England necessary, he died on ship-board shortly after leaving Malacca, in 1828.

The Rev. EBENEZER CORNWALL was a son of the well-known Mr. George Cornwall, printer in Aberdeen. In 1828 Mr. Cornwall was invited by the church "to exercise his gifts." That meant that every opportunity was given to him by the church for the purpose of preaching. In due course he entered the ministry.

He afterwards adopted Baptist principles, and filled a charge in England.

The Rev. JAMES DAWSON was a member of the church during the pastorate of Dr. Philip, by whom he was probably incited, and, in part, trained for service in the mission field. He afterwards was a pupil of Dr. Bogue's, at Gosport. He was ordained in 1814, and was sent to India under the direction of the London Missionary Society. He was stationed at Vizagapatam, where he laboured from 1815 till his death, on 14th August, 1832.

The Rev. WILLIAM D. DEY, M.A., B.D., was a member of the church, and graduated at Aberdeen University. He was then recommended by Mr. Arthur for admission to the theological course at Edinburgh. He was ordained, in 1875, minister of a church in Newcastle, but afterwards joined the Established Church of Scotland.

The Rev. WILLIAM DARGIE, M.A., was a native of the county, but, coming to Aberdeen, joined our church, and engaged in study for the ministry. He was recommended to the Theological Hall, and, having passed his course, was ordained to the church at Alexandria, in 1872. He then went to Lerwick, and subsequently joined the Established Church.

The Rev. JAMES EDWARDS, M.A., B.D., is a native of Forfar, and, as a pupil teacher, received an excellent education. Having views of the ministry, he came to Aberdeen in 1864, and entered the University, where he graduated in due course. During that period

he was a member of our church, and did yeoman service in connection with city mission work, then in its infancy. After passing the curriculum of study in our Theological Hall, Edinburgh, he was ordained in 1872, and became pastor of the church at Hamburg, and afterwards at Rhynie, Insch, and at Govan, where he now is. Mr. Edwards is both a scholar and a theologian, and in these respects would grace a professor's chair.

The Rev. ALEXANDER FYVIE, the younger brother of William Fyvie, studied at Aberdeen, under his pastor, Dr. Philip, and afterwards at Gosport. He was ordained at Bristol, and followed his brother to Surat, in 1822. He married a member of our church, Miss Jane Thomson. After paying a visit home, in 1833, he returned to Surat, where he died in 1840.

The Rev. WILLIAM FYVIE was born in 1788, at Methlic, and was a member with us during Dr. Philip's ministry. Like the preceding, he studied at Gosport, with a view to service under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. He was, along with his fellow-student, James Dawson, ordained at Bristol in 1814, and next year went to India, his destination being Surat. With his wife he paid a visit home in 1828. He resumed his duties in 1829, and when the Surat mission was given up he went to the United States, but finally retired to St. Helier, Jersey, where he died in 1863.

The Rev. CHARLES HARDIE was born at Newburgh in 1802. He became a member of our church in 1828, during the ministry of Mr. Thomson. He studied at

Homerton College, with a view to qualifying himself for the mission field. He and Charles D. Watt were ordained together at George Street Chapel, on 22nd January, 1834. The services extended to three hours and a-half. He was appointed to service at Savaü, in the South Seas, which he reached in 1836. Besides engaging in the usual duties of the mission station, Mr. Hardie, in 1849, made a tour of the out stations, and in 1854 removed to Upolu, where he assisted in establishing an educational institution. After an experience of 20 years, Mr. Hardie returned home, largely with a view to the education of his family, and subsequently became pastor of the Congregational Church at Brill, Buckingham. He died on 19th February, 1880. Mr. Hardie was brother to Mrs. James Murray, Sen., a woman held in just esteem for her strength of mind and faith.

The Rev. ROBERT HARVEY was a child of the church. He was born in 1815, put to trade soon, and, although his early education was scanty, his desire for self-improvement led him into reading and studious habits. At the age of thirty he was recommended to the Glasgow Academy, where he studied under Dr. Wardlaw. I remember seeing him, on his first vacation, attending the first Congregational Union meetings held here in 1845. Mr. Harvey was ordained pastor of the Peterhead Church, in June, 1848, and resigned his charge in 1857, having accepted a call to the church at Harray, Shetland. He remained there but a few years, when he was seized with paralysis. He returned to Aberdeen, where he died, on 24th September, 1877.

Mr. Harvey "was a well meaning man, a practical preacher, frequently referring to passing events in an intelligent manner. He was not scholarly or literary in style, but earnest in the discharge of all his duties." He possessed a very happy, cheerful disposition, and bore his long dishealth with Christian content. He was never married.

The Rev. ALEXANDER W. KNOWLES was born at Aberdeen on 10th October, 1784. When only sixteen years of age he not only became deeply interested in the religious movement which was afoot in the city, but took an earnest part in Christian work. "His active zeal and ability suggested to those with whom he was thus early associated the thought of his devoting himself to the ministry." He accordingly joined Mr. Haldane's theological classes at Edinburgh, and when his course was finished Mr. Knowles, under the auspices of the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, settled at Linlithgow. After the dissolution of the Society, the chief source of his support being thereby withdrawn, Mr. Knowles for twelve years was obliged to augment his scanty income from the church by keeping school during the week. When he died Dr. Wardlaw preached his funeral sermon, and passed on him a high encomium, as a preacher who "spoke at once to the minds and hearts of his hearers." He was an unselfish, guileless man, and deeply respected wherever he was known.

The Rev. WILLIAM LEGGE belonged to Huntly. He was recommended as a member of our church to the theological course at the Glasgow Academy. He

afterwards became minister at Reading, where he was ordained, in 1826.

The Rev. JAMES MACONNACHIE turned his attention to the ministry, and, on the recommendation of our church, he was admitted to the privileges of the Glasgow Academy, under Dr. Wardlaw. He was ordained to the church at Duncanston in 1826.

The Rev. JAMES LEMON was a native of Aberdeen, and brought up in Free John Knox Church there, under the Rev. John Stephen. He was brought under Mr. Arthur's influence, and connected himself with us. It was his purpose to have become a teacher, but in 1860 he entered on a course of study for the ministry, at the Theological Hall and Edinburgh University. After his ordination, in 1864, Mr. Lemon filled successively the Congregational pulpits at Linlithgow, Belper, Jersey and Leicester. He then joined the English Presbyterian Church, and settled in Felton, in Northumberland, where he died a few years ago.

The Rev. ROBERT MACHRAY was the grandson of Patrick Morison, one of the "original nine." He joined the church during Mr. Thomson's ministry, and, in 1822, entered on a theological course at the Glasgow Academy. After his ordination, in 1825, he ministered successively at Kirriemuir, Perth, Walthamstowe (England), and at Dumfries, where he died in 1873.

The Rev. WILLIAM MILNE, D.D. I cannot say, with certainty, that Dr. Milne was a member of our church, but the fact that he was publicly set apart for missionary

service in George Street Chapel, in 1812, would suggest such a connection. His career in the mission field was brief, but brilliant and enterprising. He assisted Dr. Morison in preparing the Chinese version of the Scriptures. He died at Malacca in 1822.

Mr. CHARLES HARDIE MURRAY was one of the young men of the church who, under Mr. Arthur's influence, entered the ministry. He never underwent a public training, but, possessing good natural abilities, and his father's gift of utterance, engaged in London City Mission work, under the care of the late Dr. J. H. Wilson. Mr. Murray successively ministered to churches at Cullen, at Thame, and in Yorkshire. He is now lecturer on the staff of the English Temperance League, and resident at Manchester.

The Rev. ROBERT PHILIP, D.D., was born in Huntly in 1791, his father being an elder in Mr. Cowie's church. The family came to Aberdeen in 1806, and, on 26th September, 1808, Robert joined our church, and, no doubt on his pastor's advice, entered himself at Hoxton Academy. On completing his studies he was ordained, and accepted the pastorate of Maberly Chapel, Kingsland. He is, however, far better known as a voluminous author of religious books than as a pastor. His works were greatly the vogue both in this country and in America, and, from a University in the latter, he obtained his D.D. degree. He sympathized strongly with his late pastor's views and aims as a missionary and philanthropist. As an intimate friend he wrote Dr. John Philip's life, under the title of *The Elijah of South Africa.* Dr. Robert Philip died in 1858.

Mr. JOHN ROBERTSON. Amongst the young men who were encouraged to think of the ministry was John Robertson, who in 1830 was recommended to the Glasgow Academy, "he having previously delivered his views of divine truth, and related his experience, and also the motives that influenced him to desire to become a preacher of the gospel, before a meeting composed of the pastor and deacons and other of the members that were willing to attend." This was the usual course of procedure. Mr. Robertson's actual career was entirely different from what might naturally have been expected to follow this forecast of it. His father was a cooper in Aberdeen, and gave his son, "a boy of parts," a fair education. The lad went through the curriculum at Glasgow Academy, to which he was recommended by the church. When his studies were finished he preached once (and once only, I think,) in Aberdeen. He specially invited his literary friends to hear him. The sermon was pronounced to be at once "philosophical and flowery." Robertson almost immediately went to London, and took to literary and journalistic work. He soon attracted the attention of John Stuart Mill, who at the time was busily engaged establishing the *Westminster Review*, and the marked change in Mr. Robertson's opinions is shown by the fact that he was appointed its editor, at least for a time. Mill (*Autobiography*), referring to this episode, says:— "I associated with myself a young Scotchman of the name of Robertson, who had some ability and information, much industry, and an active scheming head, full of devices for making the *Review* more saleable, and on whose capacities in that direction I founded a good

deal of hope." Robertson crossed Carlyle's path, and temper too. His verdict of Robertson was very different from that of Mill's. He says, writing of him, "Have nothing to do with fools. They are a fatal species." About this period Robertson paid a visit to Aberdeen, got up in a most unclerical Disraelian style, and, with the view of wooing the Parliamentary constituency against a coming election, meaning to stand in the Radical interest. He did not, however, contest the seat when the time came. He became Paris correspondent for a great London daily newspaper, a post he relinquished at the time of the *coup d'état*, when, as he averred, he was a marked man, and was shot at in the streets of Paris. On his return to London he married, for his second wife, a widow lady of means, with whom he retired to the Isle of Wight, where he spent most of his time in scientific pursuits. He died some 20 years ago. There is one very creditable circumstance in Robertson's career. Not long after he went to London, Dr. Wardlaw happened to be there, and Robertson met him at dinner, and gave him a bank cheque adequate to defray his educational expenses incurred at the Glasgow Academy. The *Scottish Congregational Year Book* describes Mr. Robertson as "Professor, English Literature, London." All that this probably means is his engaging in teaching work in London.

The Rev. JAMES SMITH was a native of Aberdeen, and born in 1803. He joined the church under Mr. Thomson. He was admitted to study at Hoxton Missionary College, ordained in 1830, and appointed

to the South Seas. He laboured for some time at Raiatea, then at Huahine, and afterwards at Tahaa, whence he wrote an interesting letter to the church, detailing his chequered experiences in the mission field. The church returned a sympathetic reply. On account of Mrs. Smith's ill-health he had to quit the scene of his labours, and came to London in 1834. Of his subsequent career I know nothing.

The Rev. GEORGE THOM was born in 1789, and joined the church under Dr. Philip. He studied under Dr. Bogue, at Gosport, for service with the London Missionary Society, by whom he was appointed to India. If I mistake not, he and his fellow-student, William Milne, D.D., were set apart by a public service in George Street Chapel. He was ordained in 1812, and at once sailed for India, which, however, he never reached. On arriving at Cape Town, he was prevailed on by the military authorities there to labour among them, and to itinerate in Cape Colony. In 1818 the Colonial Government appointed Mr. Thom to the office of Dutch minister at Caledon, when he ceased to be connected with the Society.

The Rev. CHARLES DAVIDSON WATT was born at Aberdeen in 1810, and joined our church under Mr. Thomson in 1827. After studying at Turvey, he was ordained at George Street Chapel in 1834. He was sent by the London Missionary Society to Demerara, in the West Indies. After 18 years' service, he came home and did some deputation work. Mr. Watt resumed his duties in 1843, but ill-health compelled

him to leave the Colony, when his connection with the Society ceased. He afterwards went to Australia, and became a pastor at Hindmarsh there. He died in 1875.

The Rev. JAMES H. WILSON, D.D., was born at Cullen in 1811, came to Aberdeen in 1835, and was for several years a member of our church. He pursued the career of journalist here, and in Birmingham and in London, whence he was recalled to Aberdeen to edit *The North of Scotland Gazette.* Having studied Theology at Marischal College, he began the Albion Street Mission in 1848. His efforts led to the formation of a church, which he conducted for ten years, until he was appointed Secretary of the Home Mission Society, London, an office which he held for 20 years. Dr. Wilson possessed the "habit of the pen," and wrote a variety of books, including *The Early History of Christianity in Scotland*, and a *Life of the Prince Consort.* He died at the advanced age of eighty-five. Dr. John Duncan succeeded Dr. Wilson at Albion Street, and under his exertions Trinity Congregational Church was formed, still leaving Albion Street intact.

The Rev. WILLIAM JACKSON ELMSLIE, M.A., M.D., deserves a place in this category, although only a child of our Sabbath School, to which he owed much valued stimulus. In 1845 we found ourselves on the same form at the opening of the new schoolroom—scholars in Mr. George Mann's class. Elmslie was then thirteen, already earning his living as a boot-closer. None of my Sabbath schoolmates impressed me with such a sense of goodness as did he, nor with a more earnest

passion for knowledge. A very early ambition was to be a preacher. With this in view he went through the Grammar School course, a University career, and a theological curriculum at the Free Church College. He turned his attention to missionary work in India, but the combination of healing with preaching so possessed him that he started on a course of medical study, in which he graduated as a man of thirty-two. Dr. Elmslie was stationed at Cashmir, in India, but after six or seven years of apostolic work he died in 1872. His widow wrote his memoir, under the title of *Seedtime in Cashmir.*

In addition to the foregoing, I may mention that the Rev. JOHN MURKER, M.A., of Banff, was a member of the church whilst a student at Aberdeen University. He was admitted on a line from the church at Crichie in 1827. It is also worthy of note that the only sons respectively of Mr. Alexander Thomson, of Mr. David Arthur, and of Dr. Stark, all entered the ministry. The career of the Rev. PATRICK THOMSON I have already noticed on page 71. The Rev. WILLIAM MACKINTOSH ARTHUR, M.A., graduated at Aberdeen University, and took his Divinity at Lancashire Independent College. Since then he has ministered to churches at Thornton, and at Bamford, near Rochdale, England. The Rev. WILLIAM AYLMER STARK, M.A., after graduating at Aberdeen, studied Theology at Mansfield College, Oxford. He was afterwards minister of the church at Leek, Staffordshire.

CHURCH TREASURERS AND SECRETARIES.

During the century there have been seven treasurers of the Church Funds, viz. :—

Mr. George Moir. Mr. John Marshall.
Mr. William Matthews. Mr. Hugh Ross.
Mr. John Leslie. Mr. George C. Leslie.
Mr. William Macintosh.

During the same period there have been thirteen secretaries of the church, viz. :—

Mr. George Moir. Mr. Robert Smith.
Mr. William Matthews. Mr. James Murray, Jun.
Mr. David Macallan. Mr. David Leith.
Mr. John Leslie. Mr. Alexander Robb.
Mr. James Murray. Mr. Alexander Pardy.
Mr. Joseph Tennant. Mr. James L. Tennant.
Mr. Robert R. Russell.

PRINCIPAL CHURCH OFFICERS.

These Memorials would be incomplete without a reference to the worthy men who have served the church in the humbler but not unimportant position of "principal door-keepers," or "minister's beadles," as they were designated in earlier days. As a class they are public men, sometimes better known than their ministers. By outsiders they are often accepted as representing their respective churches, and hence the necessity that they should be men of character, courtesy, and loyalty. On the whole, our church has been fortunate in the men who have held the responsible

position of principal church officer. These have been eight in all, viz. :—

James Stewart.	Robert Gilbert.
William Paul.	John Clark.
Alexander Paul.	George Leith.
John Robertson.	James Laing.

James Stewart and William Paul were two of the original nine members who were proud to serve the church in the important capacity of its principal door-keepers. The outstanding names in the group are Alexander Paul, Robert Gilbert, and John Clark.

Alexander Paul, the first of these, succeeded his father, and between them they occupied the office for about 55 years. "Sandy," as he was called with affectionate familiarity, was primitive in appearance, but quietly observant and active in the discharge of all his duties. He possessed his family characteristic of a good judgment and a reverential spirit. I see him yet, hymn book in hand, shewing the late-comers to their pews—singing all the time. Mr. King, in recording his death, pays this devoted man a just tribute when he says that he "left behind him a name that might be envied by many moving in a higher sphere."

Robert Gilbert was the next but one in succession to the post. He was a worthy, old and attached member of the church, and was for many years an affectionate teacher in the Sabbath School, and, although of a most retiring disposition, took a fair

share of the work of the church, and, in the discharge of the varied duties of principal officer, brought to it the qualities of its best traditions. General regret was manifested when it was found that he could not overtake all the duties connected with the new place of worship.

JOHN CLARK was elected to the office at the removal to Belmont Street, and for about 25 years efficiently performed the duties pertaining to it. He was a man of great industry, energy, and force of character, governed by a high sense of duty. In his earlier years he had been addicted to the unwise habits of his craft, which originally was that of an iron-moulder. From these he effectually weaned himself, and it became one of the ruling passions of his life to promote the cause of temperance, and in this he was eminently successful. Few church officials were better known or more popular in the city. John was "welcome at all frontiers." When failing health compelled him to demit his office, the members of the church presented him with a gold watch as a proof of their appreciation and confidence. At his death, in 1894, Dr. Stark happily characterized him as one who "put the same spirit into his beadleship or any other office which he had to fill that a minister ought to put into his pulpit work. He had the high spiritedness and dignity of a man who was called of God to be what he was. If early circumstances had favoured, he had natural capacity in him for a sphere much larger than he ever occupied."

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTE BOOK.

The following extracts from the Church Minute Book are not without interest, and speak for themselves :—

1st July, 1800.—A sister was charged with having married on the Lord's Day. She was restored to church privileges, on her "seeing it to be a sin, and if she had to do it again would not do it."

Another sister, on being charged with attending the Old Town Church, where the Gospel is not preached, replied that "she saw no evil in it, and likewise thought the Gospel *was* preached in the Old Town Church, though not so lively as with us." Suspended from church privileges.

9th December, 1801.—A sister is suspended for unguarded, unchristian conversation, but especially for the self-justifying, unhumbled proud spirit she discovered in course of examination.

A brother is suspended from all church meetings for having told to persons out of the church the things that were said at the former church meeting.

29th December, 1802.—For "being absent from the Lord's Supper for some time, for walking on the Sabbath, and for disobedience to parents," a young brother is rebuked.

22nd January, 1838.—Signed a memorial to Lord Melbourne, opposing the additional endowments to the Church of Scotland.

26th June, 1838.—Agreed to petition against the Bible monopoly.

28th December, 1841.—A collection made for the relief of the distress in Paisley.

1st February, 1842.—Agreed to petition Parliament against the Corn Laws.

1st July, 1842.—A collection made for the unemployed in Aberdeen, and also agreed to a Day of Humiliation on account of the state of the country.

April, 1843.—The first Congregational Union meetings held in Aberdeen.

29th September, 1843.—Two members withdrew to join the "Chartist Church."

2nd August, 1844.—The Rev. Mr. Thomson, having visited his son, minister at Chatham, the church, there, wrote a letter to George Street Church, expressive of warm sympathy and brotherly affection, and of strengthening excited by his visit.

8th March, 1846.—Agreed to petition Parliament against the sale of intoxicating drinks on Sunday.

27th April, 1852.—Agreed to drop reading the line in singing.

March, 1854.—Agreed to petition Parliament in favour of admitting Dissenters to the English Universities.

4th December, 1862.—A collection made for the operatives in Lancashire, in distress by reason of the war in America—the cotton famine.

3rd November, 1869.—Agreed to the use of unfermented wine at the Lord's Table.

CHAPTER XIV.

CENTENARY SERVICES.

IT was properly resolved to celebrate the interesting occasion of the Centenary of the Church by a series of special services, and, as a preliminary, Dr. Stark, on Sunday, 28th August, devoted his forenoon sermon to a historical review of the work of the denomination in general, founding on the words in Acts xiv. 27, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them."

Dr. Stark maintained that, whilst it is impossible to give a specific account of what, as a Christian denomination, we have contributed to the general sum of godliness in Scotland, it is reasonable to refer, in a spirit of humility, to some of our distinctive contributions to the religious life and thought of the century.

I. The movement with which our churches are identified brought an accession of spiritual life in the land—a fact admitted by witnesses who are not Congregationalists.

II. The movement also presented a practical manifestation of catholicity such as ever springs from the evangelical faith when it enters the experience as a master force. Owing to the deadness and formality which were in the Church a hundred years ago, the founders of our denomination were driven back from it to the first principles of our faith. Catholic truth and spiritual interests were ever more to us than any polity, however scriptural.

III. We have helped to give the cause of Missions its proper place, as we have ever affirmed and magnified the missionary idea as an integral and essential part of the Church of Christ, drawing no invidious distinction between home and foreign missions. This missionary tradition has been maintained all through our history.

IV. We have ever contended for the principle that preaching the Gospel is not a function to be confined to any particular class of Christians. Whilst believing in a stated and educated ministry, we believe that responsibility and religious work is limited only by ability and opportunity.

V. We have done something in setting before Scotland the principle that Christ's Church ought to be a society of Christ's people, though this part of our testimony has often been misunderstood, and we have been blamed for judging the heart. We deny the identity of church and congregation, and are pledged to the principle that the Church is a society of believing men and women, without tying ourselves to any particular form of ascertaining the spiritual fitness for membership.

VI. We have done something to liberalize the theology of Scotland. Our leaders were evangelists first and theologians after, but their intense evangelism enabled them to arrive at conclusions which brought nothing but the authority of Scripture to support it.

VII. We have, as Congregationalists, exhibited a historical form of church polity, which has something to say for itself among surrounding ecclesiastical institutions.

VIII. Our best contributions to religious thought and life are to be found in the men we have reared, such as Ralph Wardlaw, David Russell (of Dundee), William Lindsay Alexander, James Morison, and many more. Indeed, our work in rearing strong spiritual men has been far more important than the propagation of a polity.

On Sunday, 4th September, Principal Fairbairn of Mansfield College, Oxford, preached from the words, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House, they will be still praising Thee"—Psalm lxxxiv., ver. 4. Referring at the outset to the humble men and women who founded the church and congregation that now were, Dr. Fairbairn said they thought only of the old barn-place which was good enough for them to shelter from wind and element and storm, made to worship God. They thought, perhaps, of a place little better than that which Carlyle described as his father's church, built of stone without lime, thatched with heath, yet a place where the priestliest man he ever knew had preached, and visions of the Eternal came to his waiting soul. For, if they built a place like that, why did they build it? That into it might come a man

possessed of a great hunger for God, passionate in his quest for it, asking where God was that he might find Him; that into it might come a woman, the light of whose life had gone out, with ashes where a heart should be, asking that life might come where there was death, and consolation where desolation dwelt. They built it that the young man haunted by temptation, driven by guilt, might find a newer and a nobler life and a Saviour able to save. They built it that a man might stand before men and speak the faith he lived by, and declare the word he brought straight from the Eternal God; and they built that bare barn-place, not because they thought meanly of the Eternal God, but because they thought him so majestic that He made the place of His feet glorious, and where they found Him there He abode.

There were some phases of their modern life (continued Dr. Fairbairn) that were an utter weariness to him. He heard men say, "I don't go to church to hear a man speak; I go to praise God." When he spoke of praising God, what did he mean?—singing a third-rate hymn to fourth-rate music, and counting that worship of God. The men who built a plain meeting-house built a place where God and man could meet; not man to do honour to God by condescending to praise Him in his song. God met man face to face, as a man met his friend, and they had to take this evident purpose of the men who formed such congregations as part of a great movement, the passion of men for God. Their fathers had a great faith in the salvation of the souls of men. They needed to have that faith renewed, and faith in the salvation of people as well.

In the afternoon a special service was held in the church for the children and young people. The meeting was addressed by Dr. Stark, who drew attention more particularly to the lives and evangelistic work of the Haldanes, and by Mr. Bulloch, who drew attention to a history of the Sabbath School.

In the evening, Principal Fairbairn again preached. His text was Matt. xvi., ver. 18. "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." To a crowded audience, Dr. Fairbairn gave a masterly and eloquent exposition of the history and the growth in complexity of the idea of the Church, closing with an interesting and instructive reference to the Reformation.

On the following evening the appropriate closing service marking this historical and auspicious occasion took the form of a social gathering. The large audience embraced many more besides those of our own church and congregation. Tea was served in the halls below, and the company afterwards met in the church, where the chair was taken by the pastor, Dr. Stark. The platform was a most representative one, including Rev. Principal Fairbairn; Rev. Principal Salmond, Free Church College, Aberdeen; Sir William Henderson; Rev. Professor Cowan, Aberdeen University; Rev. Dr. John Duncan; Rev. R. M. Cairney, Albion Street; Rev. Alexander Brown, St. Paul Street; Rev. Archibald Young, Carden Place U.P. Church; Rev. W. S. Chedburn, Baptist Church; Councillor Kemp; Messrs. Gray Campbell Fraser, John Leith, Jun., John S. Sutherland, James Smith, George

Murray, Alexander G. Souter, John Bulloch, &c., &c. Apologies were read from Rev. W. D. Scott, South Parish Church; Rev. Dr. Beatt, Belmont Street U.P. Church; Messrs. G. F. Duthie, Woodside; and James Crichton.

The meeting was begun by the audience singing the 23rd Psalm, after which Dr. Duncan offered prayer.

The various speakers entered thoroughly into the spirit of the occasion, their addresses being listened to by a most sympathetic audience. At intervals an excellent choir performed several anthems, the general result being an ideal meeting.

The Chairman, Dr. STARK, gave a cordial welcome to all who had come forward to rejoice with us on the very interesting occasion. We looked back on the history of the church that we might be the better able to look forward, determined to make the future brighter, better, stronger, and more useful than the past had been, not only for ourselves but for the city in which we were placed.

Dr. DUNCAN gave a characteristic and pleasantly reminiscent address, happily recalling his own personal experiences of the church, and of many worthies he had known to occupy the pulpit and the pews of the old Loch Kirk. He gratefully acknowledged the benefits and inspirations he had received from his contact with them.

The Rev. ARCHIBALD YOUNG, as coming from a sister church, honoured ours and our minister, and the Congregational body, for missionary impulse and enthusiasm in Scotland, and for the noble work done across the border in opposing sacerdotalism. With

great humour he combated the theory that our church was not a church, but a sect, and that the pastor was not a properly ordained minister. He held that if a man should go forth to declare the message of salvation, be he a tinker, like Bunyan, or a seaman, like James Haldane, he was a true minister of Jesus Christ.

Mr. BULLOCH was briefly reminiscent of the founders of the church, and, in studying their history, he had become convinced that their prevailing note was one of moral seriousness, a note that had succeeded with them, and would with us, if cultivated.

Sir WILLIAM HENDERSON expressed great pleasure at taking part in the day's proceedings. He had a warm side to the Independents. His uncle, the eminent and earnest George Cowie, minister of Huntly, was an Independent, and he himself only narrowly escaped being one. Union among the churches was in the air, and, after the union of the Free and U.P. Churches, he did not despair of a union with the Congregationalists.

The Rev. PRINCIPAL SALMOND offered his sincere congratulations, and commented on the good work of the Congregational churches in Aberdeen, who had never lived for themselves. Perhaps their special vocation was no longer distinctive, before them, as rescuers of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland from dormancy and deadness, but they still had the work that all of the evangelical churches had to do, and with whom they would willingly stand shoulder to shoulder.

Professor COWAN, in the course of an eloquent eulogy of Congregationalism, wished that it had been possible and practicable that the noble work done by the fathers of Scottish Congregationalism could have

been done within the Scottish Presbyterian Church. It was a work that laid Scotland under a deep debt for the growth of earnestness and spiritual fervour. Both churches, he said, were very different in 1798 to what they were in 1898. Professor Cowan paid high tributes to the qualities in such men as the Haldanes and Dr. Lindsay Alexander.

Rev. W. S. CHEDBURN was glad of the opportunity to express his regard and sympathy. If, said he, they could not be one in outward form, an increasing growth in charity and brotherly kindness would make them one in their testimony and in their work.

Principal FAIRBAIRN, for one reason, felt signally pleased to stand there that night. When he went forth, St. Paul Street Church and Belmont Street Church were churches of two denominations, that night they were churches of one. Much had been said of this centenary of the church, and of Congregationalism, and much remained to be said. Scottish churches had had many and noble heirs to their faith and work. Should Congregationalists of the north meet and forget George Macdonald? If they wanted to know what the Huntly Missionar Kirk was, let them read *David Elginbrod*, and *Robert Falconer*, and *Alec Forbes of Howglen*. No man who knew only the Independency of Scotland had the ghost of an idea what it meant. What it meant for England, for the English people, he did not dream. He noted how the spirit of Independency had crossed with the Pilgrim Fathers to America, and what its mighty effect had been. The Congregational churches of Scotland were not only one in faith with those of England and New England, and the great

order of societies that had done most of all for the expansion of the English people and the realization of the freedom of its life. They were all one great body, one great marching army, and the antithesis of Independency was not Presbytery, it was uniformity in form of rule that so centralized, as to leave no place for the unit, no function for the individual, no room for the larger and freer life.

With such elevated sentiments, couched in such appropriate words, ended this memorable meeting, marking the close of one era and the dawning of another in our church history.

REV. JAMES ALEXANDER HALDANE.

APPENDIX A.

THE BROTHERS HALDANE.

It may help to illustrate, if not to account for, the course of events that led to the formation of almost all the Congregational Churches of Scotland if I narrate briefly the apostolic career of the devoted and godly brothers, Robert and James Alexander Haldane. I have already indicated in the text that the Aberdeen church, whilst aided by their advice and stimulated by their encouragement, would have been established without their assistance.

Descended from ancient stocks of landed Scottish families, the Haldanes possessed the education and characteristics of their class. They were early left orphans. By the interest of Lord Camperdown, their maternal uncle, Robert, the elder brother, obtained an officer's commission in the Royal Navy, where he saw a good deal of active service in the warlike times at the close of last century. James also followed a sea-faring career, and, whilst still a young man, became captain of an East Indiaman, a position of great responsibility and profit.

During the frequent visits of the brothers to Gosport, they both came under the direct personal influence of Dr. Bogue, with whom they formed an intimate friendship, and for whom they entertained the utmost veneration. It was not, however, till they retired from active service that they were awakened to any deep sense of the supreme importance of religion. When this change came it was accompanied by practical and unique proofs of its reality. Robert, who possessed the fine estate of Airthry, in

Stirlingshire, sold it for some £70,000, and devoted the proceeds to most earnest endeavours to propagate evangelical truth both at home and abroad. Their first intention was to found a missionary enterprise in India, a scheme which the Government would not sanction.

In their concern for the spread of a living faith they came to see that no more suitable field of operations existed than that of their own native land, in which, says their biographer, "the Scottish Church was more favourable to Deism than any other religion." Their plan of working was to associate themselves with men of tried godly character, with whom, in 1797, Captain Haldane made a remarkable evangelical tour throughout Scotland, extending to the Orkneys. In the course of it, Aberdeen was reached. Captain Haldane preached several times, both in Marischal College Close; and in Old Aberdeen, and at "Gilcomstone, a small town in the neighbourhood." The population turned out by thousands to hear the Captain of an East Indiaman preach and pray. No doubt the novelty of an unclerical gentleman, in "powdered hair tied behind," drew the people, but the Captain's Boanerges-like eloquence and earnestness arrested them wherever he went.* On the return journey Captain Haldane preached five times in Aberdeen. These preaching tours were continued for several years, and naturally resulted in the establishment of small churches throughout the whole of Scotland, many of which were built, equipped, and supplied with preachers, largely at the expense of the benevolent brothers. It was not their object to set up Congregational Churches, but to establish communities of Christian men and women. They were not ecclesiastics, but evangelists. At the same time the circumstances of the case so far shaped and determined the Congregational polity. In the course of events Captain Haldane established a permanent congregation in Edinburgh, and, qualifying himself by a course

* Dr. Alexander thus felicitously characterizes Captain Haldane:—"Dignified in manner, commanding in speech, fearless in courage, unhesitating in action, he everywhere met the rising storm with the boldness of the British sailor and the courtesy of a British gentleman, as well as with the uprightness and inoffensiveness of a true Christian."

of study, abandoned his lay character, and was duly ordained to the ministry. The necessity of training a ministry to supply the many churches gathered throughout the country, pressed the brothers into an expensive scheme of giving a theological training to young men of evangelical tendencies.

Up to extreme old age the two brothers, each in his own way, by pen and preaching, continued their able and multifarious activities with undiminished zeal, liberality, and conspicuous capacity. What the Wesleys did for England that the Haldanes did for Scotland. It is safe to say that, so far as their native land is concerned, no men of any rank have made a deeper impression on the religious life of the people, nor deserve to be held in greater respect, nor remembered with more gratitude for their self-denying labours.

APPENDIX B.

To Messrs. Ebenezer Gibb, George Moir, Alexander Innes, and the rest of the Brethren who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

DEAR BRETHREN,

You will no doubt think that I have been neglectful in being so long of writing you, but, as I was about to write you, I received the agreeable news of some of your number coming to Turriff, and of having the satisfaction of seeing you there. Since that time till of late I had nothing worthy of notice so as I thought I could trouble you with. About three weeks ago, one John Mitchell, a member of the congregation of Whitehill (a sensible and godly man), was taken to censure by the Session of Whitehill merely for hearing Mr. Watt preach. This he would not own as sinful or even as a *fault*, which if he would have done he would have been continued in communion, but that he would not do. He told the Moderator and Session that, as he was a rational creature, he had a right to judge for himself, and that Revelation did not lessen that right, but rather augmented it, and that he would not sacrifice that right to *any church under heaven.* For this he was immediately excluded from communion, and also from the prayer meetings. He signified his desire to have a meeting with us at Byth, which we were willing of, and met there about three weeks ago. The persons who met there were—William Gibb, James Davie, George Legg, Alex. Wilson, John Sime, John Mitchell, and myself, and some women. There were some more men that would have come, but they could not get it done owing to some circumstances only.

Having met, we considered, after praying together, what we were to do. After some agreeable conversation, we came to the resolution to constitute ourselves into a Society, to keep by [each] other, and meet for prayer as often as we could, and to wait Providence.

It would be worth your while, if I had time to give you a detail of the arguments used by John Mitchell at the meeting of Session on the right of private judgment, but I cannot enter upon it. I shall only tell you, he is a man like myself, of very little learning, but far surpasses me or the generality of unlearned men in a clear judgment and a great memory, and, as to his knowledge of church history, he surpasses all the men I have ever been acquainted with as yet, either learned or unlearned; but what surpasses all, he is to all appearance a pious Christian.

He tells me he has been an Independent for eighteen years past, in his judgment, although he could never see an opening. He is a man of great respect with a good number of the congregation of Whitehill, and I have some thought that he may prove useful, as Providence has placed his situation about the centre of the congregation, but I would not wish to flatter myself. He told me he wrote you about five weeks ago, but he had not received an answer, and was concluding that his letter had not come to your hand. He is the man that you mentioned in your letter who had taken out Neale's *History of the Puritans*, although there was a mistake about his residence, for he dwells in Auchoch, in the parish of New Deer.

I was up at Huntly two weeks ago, and I saw some of my correspondents there belonging to the congregation of Grange, and there appears to be a moving amongst them which appears to be somewhat strange, considering that their minister is one of the greatest bigots in the Secession. I sent them Dr. Owen's *Treatise on Church Government*, viz., the abridgement of that work, which I think better for an ordinary reader than the book at large, and they appear to be satisfied with it all except the appendix. I have little more to say to you at present, but only we earnestly entreat your prayers that the Lord would open up a way of deliverance for us, a poor handful of people that knows not what to do.

Our Baptist brethren are still on the same sentiments that they were when some of you saw them, viz. :—that they would join with us if we would get a lay preacher, but they mean to give no support to a clergyman ; if they should give any support to a clergyman it would be one of their own way, and you know, this could be no relief to us. And more than that, were it so we do not think that it would be for general edification, as the people here are greatly prejudiced at the Baptists, and we fear people would not come and hear the Gospel on that account, and if they did not hear no good could be done. And, besides, we think their design in joining with us is that we might become Baptists, and there are some of us, I am sure, who have read more on the controversy, on both sides, than any of the Baptists in this place, and, I hope, with some degree of candour, and although we love and esteem our brethren, we are no more Baptists than ever we were. We have a Sabbath evening school at Millseat. It is taught by Peter Panton and myself, and a man belonging to the Relief, and although we had but a small beginning, we have as many now as we can well manage, and it is likely to do well. I must have done. My kind love to all the brethren. I hope this will find you all in good health, as we are, and that the Church of Christ may be purged from all the dross and tin of human inventions is the hearty prayer of your sincere friend and brother,

JOHN MORISON.

Millseat, August the 13th, 1798.

APPENDIX C.

KING'S PAMPHLET LIBRARY.

KING'S Pamphlet Library forms, perhaps, the most remarkable local collection of pamphlets; but, like too many other literary storehouses, which, for various reasons, different in different cases, might as well be non-existent for all that is known and used of them. It is absolutely unknown, except to a very limited circle. Hence the present article.

This collection was bequeathed to Belmont Congregational Church, where it is now housed, by the late George King, bookseller in Aberdeen, brother of the late Robert King, author of *Covenanters in the North*, and uncle of Surgeon-Major George King, the well-known botanist, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Calcutta. In the course of a long life and connection with books, Mr. King—who was one of that type of men, fast dying out, who destroy nothing—had made a large collection of pamphlets, and other prints, to be classed under that name. These he had bound together, and intended to present to the library of the Free Church College, Aberdeen, but the bequest of a similar collection to that library, by the late Alexander Thomson of Banchory, forestalled his intention, and so he left his collection in 1872 to his own church, Belmont Congregational, along with a great number of other books, and a fine set of the early volumes of the Aberdeen *Free Press*. By the conditions of his will, the pamphlets are not to be taken out of the place, and save for dust, which is their only companion, they stand in their shelves, untouched by any one, and in good condition.

The collection consists of four hundred volumes and five cancelled ones, in all four hundred and five volumes, which include very nearly 4150 pamphlets. The volumes, which contain from two to fifty-two separate pamphlets each, are of all sizes, from large 4to to 18mo, and they are arranged and numbered according to their size. The collection has some distinguishing features worthy of notice. Unlike most similar collections, for example, the volumes are all uniformly bound (in half calf), and uniformly labelled *(Pamphlets: King's Collection, 1860.)* Each volume has a printed title page—*Pamphlets: Collected by George King, Carden Place, Aberdeen, MDCCCLX. — LXIV. Aberdeen: George & Robert King, 28 St. Nicholas Street*—while a number of blank leaves have been bound along with each for future annotations. Unlike many other pamphlet collections, too, which often are very one-sided, representing only the peculiar tastes and pursuits of the collector, King's collection has no limit as to subject. Every sphere of thought, literature, science and art, is well represented. Two of the strongest features are, as might be expected, local literature, and religious or theological literature—the first from the collector's hunting grounds, and the second as naturally contributing more pamphlets to the world of books than any other kind of literature.

In its local literature, we have all that kind of stray odds and ends which in most cases find their way to the paper-maker. There are, for example, sermons by local divines, galore, reports of societies and institutions, municipal and other squabbles, poems and essays by local authors, booksellers' and sale catalogues, stray numbers of magazines and newspapers, university matters, and locally printed works. Among the latter are four Rabans, considered by Mr. J. P. Edmond (*Aberdeen Printers*, pp. 75 and 77) to be unique. They are the *Solemn League and Covenant*, 1643, and three *Proclamations* of 1644, and occur in a volume of fifty pamphlets of nothing but prints from 1634-44, which had been undoubtedly bound together before coming into Mr. King's possession. Sermons on all subjects, theological controversies from all points of view, missions, temperance, and slavery, all fully represented, need not be detailed, most of them

being of little value, except the older ones. Politics and Parliamentary affairs, acts, law, and political economy figure conspicuously, while scientific subjects from very early dates find a good place. As for antiquities, in Scotch and English history, or rather historical contributions, biography, and all that quaint type of pamphlets which booksellers are wont to catalogue as "curious," the collection is unusually strong. There is, in fact, a fine collection of those waifs and strays of pamphlets which distinguished the latter half of last, and the beginning of the present, century, and which form an inextricable web to the bibliographer or researcher. Such, in a desultory way, are the chief features of King's pamphlets. A printed catalogue was made, but, comprising the contents of every volume separately, it is extremely awkward for use, while the library copy is the only one I know of.

J. Malcolm Bulloch.

APPENDIX D.

In tracing the history of our church, the question naturally rose as to the precedence in point of time of various Scottish Congregational Churches of the period—those at Annan, Paisley, Perth and Aberdeen being almost of the same age. As a matter of purely historical or antiquarian interest, grateful at least to those who are "troubled with a pride of accuracy," I have made certain enquiries, with the following results :—

With regard to the church at Annan, there can be little doubt of its taking the precedence in time. The *Evangelical Magazine* for June, 1794, in narrating the opening services, adds :—"We are informed that this is the only church in Scotland organized on the Independent principles of Church government." The Rev. Andrew Carnson was its only pastor. The cause, however, collapsed in two years and became extinct, and the chapel passed into the hands of the Roman Catholics. The existing Congregational Church at Annan is of the comparatively modern date of 5th May, 1843, and has no real connection with the earlier formation. The Rev. Henry Wight, then of Carlisle, officiated at the formation of the present church.

The origin of the Paisley church is not so clearly established. The Rev. James Ross of Glasgow, in a statement compiled on Early Independency in Paisley, says :—"In 1796, I believe, a 'Tabernacle Church' was formed in Paisley, and was the mother church of the present Congregational Church." In support of this view, Mr. Ross informs me that "the hymn book in use by the members of the church bears the date 1796, and some old men long ago declared that the church was formed in the year before that, 1795." I fail to see the force of the hymn book testimony, unless it can be shown that it was the product of the church, and the oral evidence *may* be correct, but it is vague. There is no reason to doubt the continuity of the church from its origin, but that origin, as yet, is not supported by satisfactory documentary or other historical evidence.

It is somewhat difficult to make out the true origin of the Congregational Church at PERTH. Mr. William Sievwright states in his *Historical Sketch of the Congregational Church, Perth*, that a number of thinking and earnest men became Congregationalists, and bought Paul Street Chapel in 1793 or 1794. In October of the latter year the Rev. James Garie entered on the charge, which he held for 18 months. In 1796 he proposed to have the chapel recognized by the Perth Presbytery, but was opposed by the proprietors. He then left, and endeavoured to enter the Established Church, as a minister, but was rejected. Meantime the chapel had been sold, but the old members once more invited Mr. Garie to become their pastor. This was in 1798, in which year the *Missionary Magazine* announces the purchase of Paul's Chapel for the use of "Mr. Garie and a congregation of Christian people," whereupon Mr. Sievwright 'supposes' that the church was only then properly organized. Once again there is a tantalizing absence of historical proof. But here comes in an interesting crux, which I have not been able to solve. In a letter now before me, dated Perth, 4th December, 1798, "James Colquhoun, Pastor," of the Congregational Church there, in its name, congratulates the church in George Street, Aberdeen, on being "organized on the Apostolic plan of Primitive Christianity," and adds, "It is now *two years since we were organized* on the liberal English Congregational plan. . . . We endeavour, as you do, to steer clear of the Scotch dissenters, and Scotch Independents, where it is but too evident that the contracted love of party too much abounds." There is not the remotest reference to this church and its pastor in Mr. Sievwright's sketch. More light on the subject is desirable.

The summary appears to be that of the *existing* churches, whilst Paisley, and even Perth, may have been in existence as organized communities so early as 1796 and 1798 respectively, the proof thereof is not quite clear. On the other hand, it can be affirmed that at the present time the ABERDEEN church, now assembling in Belmont Street, enjoys the distinction of being the first among the Congregational Churches in Scotland to possess *bona fide* historical evidence of its early existence.

INDEX.

Allan, John, 134.
Alexander, Rev. W. Lindsay, D.D., 26, 33, 98, 107.
Arthur, Rev. David, 74, 82, 83, 88, 92, 93, 95, 98, 99, 108, 109, 121, 122.
—— Mrs., 93.
—— Rev. John, 84.
—— Rev. Wm. Mackintosh, 148.

Bain, Alexander, LL.D., 59.
Batchelor, Rev. Henry, D.D., 98.
Begg, Rev. Alexander, 67, 136.
Belcher, Mr., 93.
Bell, Rev. James Barton, 107, 108.
Bennett, Dr. James, 17-19, 33-35, 38, 39.
Black, Peter, 7, 19, 31, 56.
Bogue, Dr., 10, 12, 16, 25.
Boulton, William, 108, 123.
Brown, Rev. Alexander, 119.
—— Rev. Mr., 69.
Bulloch, John, Senior, 94.
—— John, 100, 117, 129, 158, 160.
—— Mrs., 118.
—— J. Malcolm, 160, *et seq.*
Burton, Rev. Thomas, 42.

Caird, Rev. David, 137.
Cameron, Elizabeth, 121.
Campbell, Rev. Mr., Cheltenham, 82.
Carlyle, Thomas, 145.
Chedburn, Rev. W. S., 161.
Clark, John, 151.
—— William (E. C.), 95.
—— William, 100, 103, 117.
Clinterty, Alexander, 7, 9, 19, 30.
Coles, Thomas, 35, 36, 114.
Collie, Rev. David, 137.
Cooper, Thomas, 87.
Cornwall, Rev. Ebenezer, 137.
Cowan, Rev. Professor, D.D., 160.
Cowie, Rev. George, of Huntly, 43.

Dalgarno, James, 100, 102.
Dargie, Rev. William, M.A., B.D., 138.
Davidson, Mr., of Hoxton, 53.
—— David, 72, 78, 115, 117.
Dawson, Rev. James, 138.
Dey, Rev. William D., M.A., B.D., 138.
Duncan, Rev. John, D.D., 108, 159.
—— William, 72, 73, 115.
Dunn, Mrs., 106.

Edwards, Rev. James, M.A., B.D., 123 138.
Emslie, Rev. Wm. Jackson, M.A., M.D., 147.
Ewing, Rev. Greville, 39, 41, 42, 67, 84.

Fairbairn, Rev. Principal, D.D., 156, 158, 161.
Farquhar, Alexander, 100, 105.
Forrester, Rev. Mr., Arbroath, 56.
Fyvie, Rev. Alexander, 139.
—— Rev. William, 139.

Garie, Rev. James, 42.
Gibb, Ebenezer, 7, 12, 13, 19, 30, 37, 56.
—— Rev. Joseph, Banff, 67.
—— William, 30.
Gilbert, Robert, 150.
Gilchrist, Rev. Mr., Dundee, 56.
Gilfillan, Rev. Thomas, 98.

Glegg, Robert, 111.
Goldsworth, John (printed "Goldsmith"), 124.
Gordon, Jean, 38.
—— William, 70.
—— George, 72, 75.
Gowan, Rev. Anthony T., D.D., 83, 110.
Grant, John, 72, 76.
Gray, James, 133, 134.
Green, Alexander, 111.

Haldane, Rev. J. A., 3, 12, 17, 20, 25, 47, 50.
—— Robert, 39, 40.
—— The Brothers, 154, *et seq.*
Hardie, Rev. Charles, 80, 139.
Harvey, Rev. Robert, 140.
Henderson, Mrs., 33.
—— Sir William, 160.
Hervey, Jean, 38.
Hill, George, 134.
—— Rev. Rowland, 41, 42.
Hirst, Roland, 134.
Hoffman, Herr, 134.
Hogarth, James, 123.
Hunter, Rev. John, 98.

Innes, Alexander, 5, 9, 16, 19, 27, 33, 52, 54-57.
—— William, 72, 73.

Johnstone, David, M.D., 100.

Kennedy, Rev. John, D.D., 70, 84, 99.
Keith, James, 89, 20, 94.
Kidd, Dr., 34, 101.
King, George, 27, 61, 63, 72, 76-78, 124, 128-131.
—— Robert, 77.
—— Sir George, 77, 131.
Knowles, Rev. Alexander W., 141.

Laird, Peter, 111, 123.
Legge, Rev. William, 141.
Leith, John, 100, 107, 129.
Lemon, Rev. James, 142.
Levy, John, 97, 102.
Leslie, Alexander, 100, 103.
—— George Christie, 111, 123, 149.
—— John, 72-74, 93, 94, 115, 117, 129, 149.
—— Thomas, 111, 125.
Leslie, William, 72, 78, 79. 94, 95, 107.
Loader, Rev. Thomas, 40.

Macallan, David, 60, 149.
Macdonald, William P., 122.
Mackie, Alexander, 133, 134.
Macintosh, William, 111, 119, 149.
McLean, David, 133.
McNaughton, James, 100, 102.
Maconnachie, Rev. James, 142.
Machray, Rev. Robert, 142.
Malcolm, Francis, 60.
Marshall, John, 89, 90, 115, 149.
Mathieson, James, 89.
Matthews, James, LL.D., 107, 111, 112.
—— William, 51, 52, 115, 127, 129, 149.
—— William, Jun., 72, 75, 97, 115.
Melvin, James, 89.
Middleton, James, 72, 79.
Mill, John Stuart, 144.
Miller, Rev. John, 98.
Milne, Rev. William, D.D., 142, 146.
Morison, Rev. John, D.D., 12, 13, 20, 83.
—— John, 12, 111, 157, *et seq.*
—— Rev. James, D.D., 103.
—— Patrick, 7, 19, 30, 51, 52.
Moir, George, 1-8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24-27, 30, 33, 37, 38, 43, 47, 48, 54, 127, 129, 149.
—— Mrs., 25, 26, 37.
—— George (II.), 63, 64, 72.
Morris, Rev. Frederick Sidney, 99.
Moseley, Rev. Mr., 37, 40.
Munro, Joseph, 133, 134.
Murker, Rev. John, M.A., 148.
Murray, Charles Hardie, 143.
—— James, 72, 80, 101, 116, 117, 149.
—— Mrs., 140.
—— James, Jun., 100, 131, 149.

Orme, Rev. William, of Perth, 65.

Page, Henry, 35, 36, 114.
Pardy, Alexander, 100, 149.
Parkhill, John, 96.
Park, John, 100, 103.
Parsons, Rev. Edward, 40, 44.
Paul, Alexander, 32, 69, 150.
—— Margaret, 59.

Paul, William, 9, 19, 32, 33, 56, 150.
Penman, Rev. Richard, 56, 67.
Philip, Rev. John, D.D., 53-59, 61-64, 75.
—— Rev. Robert, D.D., 143.
—— Rev. Thomas Durant, 63.
Porter, George, 133.

Riddell, James, 89, 91, 94.
Robertson, Rev. James, Crichie, 67.
—— John, 123.
—— John, *Littérateur*, 144.
—— John, *Beadle*, 150.
Robb, Alexander, 100, 105, 149.
Robinson, William, 72, 81.
Ross, Hugh, 72, 79, 80, 93, 94, 96, 115-117, 131, 149.
—— Rev. James, 172.
Russell, Catherine, 106.
—— Rev. David, D.D., 56, 67, 83.
—— Robert Rait, 111, 118, 119, 149.
—— William, 111.

Salmond, Rev. Principal, D.D., 160.
Shinie, Ferguson, 111, 118.
Slatterie, Rev. Mr., 40.
Smith, Robert, 100, 149.
—— John Smart, 111.
—— James, 111, 123.
—— Rev. James, 145.
—— Rev. Mr., Blackhills, 67.
Souter, Alexander G., 111, 118.
Spence, Rev. James, M.A., 64, *et seq.*
—— Rev. Robert, 98.
Stafford, Rev. Dr., 6, 8.
Stark, Rev. James, D.D., 108, 110, 111, 119, 133, 151, 153, 159.
—— Mrs., 111.
—— Rev. Wm. Aylmer, 148.
Stephen, William, 5, 8, 9, 19, 28-31, 33, 51, 52, 56.
Stephens, Rev. William, 35, 41, 44-51.
Stewart, James, 8, 19, 32, 150.
—— Rev. Alexander, D.D., 119.
Sutherland, John S., 123.

Taylor, Peter, 63, 64.
Tennant, James Laing, 111, 149.
—— Joseph, 100, 124, 149.
Tester, James, 124.
Thom, Rev. George, 146.
—— James, 72.
Thomson, Rev. Alexander, 64-70, 72, 82-84, 88, 89, 92, 101, 133.
—— Andrew, 108, 123.
—— Rev. Patrick, 70-72, 89, 115, 148.
—— Rev. Radford, 72.
—— William, 51, 52.
—— William, Jun., 72, 74.
Tulloch, Lawrence, 100, 106.
Turner, Charles, 127.

Walker, William, 97, 100, 101, 129.
Wallace, Rev. David, 98.
Wardlaw, Rev. Ralph, D.D., 61, 63, 84, 141, 145.
Watson, George, 116, 117, 121.
—— Rev. John, 26, 33-35.
Watt, Rev. Charles Davidson, 140, 146.
Weaver, Rev. Robert, 42.
Westerman, Edward, 111.
Whincup, John G. Lawson, 111.
Williamson, John, 72, 119.
Wilson, Rev. James H., D.D., 147.
Wood, James, 72, 79.
Wydown, Rev. S., 40.
Young, Rev. Archibald, 159.